FALL FANTASY TV PREVIEW INSIDE!

REALMS OF FANTASY

PLUS:
Books, Games, TV & Folkroots

Curtis 02271

TANITH LEE

Dragons & Warriors

Tolkien Art of John Howe

Demon in the Jewel

By Naomi Kritzer

The River Spirit

By Devon Monk

$3.99US $4.99CAN

10>

0 71486 02271 8

October 2000

RETAILER: DISPLAY UNTIL OCTOBER 17

Parasite Eve II™

Combat monstrous enemies with an optimized real-time battle system.

Horrifying CG cinemas and sharper graphics bring the shocking new storyline to life.

Upgrade and customize your weapons and armor to take on new foes.

Use powerful new Parasite Energy abilities to attack the new Neo Mitochondrion Creatures.

PlayStation®

SQUARESOFT®

www.squaresoft.com

Published by Square Electronic Arts L.L.C.

The Threat Returns

Aya Brea is back on the job. The Neo Mitochondrion Creature infestation has resurfaced and has taken a sinister twist. The outcome of this battle will determine earth's dominant species.

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Blood and Gore

Animated Violence

© 2000 Square Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. SQUARE SOFT and the SQUARESOFT logos are registered trademarks of Square Co., Ltd. Parasite Eve is a trademark of Square Co., Ltd. Based on the novel: Hideaki Sena "parasite EVE" (Kadokawa Horror Bunko). Character designed by Tetsuya Nomura. 3DCG: © 1999 SQUARE/SQUARE VISUAL WORKS. PlayStation and the PlayStation logos are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

THE DARK KNIGHTS TOYED WITH THEIR BLOODY TROPHIES BEFORE DISGARDING THEM LIKE THE REST
Become empowered with deadly magical spells.
Vanquish your enemies with seven powerful Heroes.
Battle in a Special RPG DeathMatch mode.
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE
War of Heroes
GATHERING DEVELOPER
PHANTAGRAM

Become immersed in your kingdom with over 120,000 frames of animation.
Inhabit your realm with seventy unique characters.

AN INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN A WORLD of MAGIC

Danger awaits, hardy traveler, in the turbulent lands of Arcanum! Prepare potion or pistol, for armament is a must! Encounter more than 500 friends and fiends of the oddest sort on dozens of quests and campaigns. Travel alone through this massive realm, or invite companions to join you online. And for those with discriminating taste, we sport the most advanced role-playing system ever created in this or any other reality.

Brigands beware! Eighty spells in 16 Colleges are at your disposal, while the mechanically inclined can construct wonders of the age with 56 technological degrees from eight disciplines.

An epic story with multiple paths ensures you'll never play a single or multiplayer game the same way twice. Or create your very own online campaigns with the Arcanum World Editor.

Dozens of quests and a limitless character design let you decide the destiny of your character, be it elf, half-ogre or other sundry races.

© 2000 Sierra On-Line, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Sierra, Sierra Studios and Arcanum are trademarks of Sierra On-Line, Inc. The Troika logo is a registered trademark of Troika Games, LLC.

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

PC CD ROM GAME

TROIKA

SIERRA STUDIOS™

www.arcanum1.com

NO MAGES ALLOWED
BULLETS & BRIMSTONE
Witness the metallurgical might of the repeating rifle or unleash the dark arts of a Hellgate, as a mechanical future challenges a magical past.
ARCANUM™
OF STEAMWORKS & MAGICK OBSCURA

ABOVE: Our Gallery allows you to peek into a world of myth, mystery, and magic. COVER: Luis Royo combines sensuality and strength in Steel for Leonardo's Dream.

REALMS OF FANTASY

Departments

12 EDITORIAL

14 LETTERS

16 BOOKS *BY GAHAN WILSON, PAUL DI FILIPPO*
A young reader's edition of fairy tales transcends nursery room pallor.

26 TELEVISION *BY RESA NELSON*
Fall 2000 TV preview: A look into new and returning shows.

34 FOLKROOTS *BY HEINZ INSU FENKL*
Some physicians are critical of the symbol associated with wealth, commerce, and the patron god of thieves.

68 GALLERY *BY BRIAN SIBLEY*
Prepare to enter a world beyond your imagination.

86 GAMES *BY ERIC T. BAKER*
From dungeon crawling to werewolves, adventurers can experience it all.

98 CONTRIBUTORS

Fiction

40 LUTHER AND THE DRAGON
By Franklin Thatcher
The world we see is shaped by the world we know. But awe is a feeling that crosses the gulf of time.

46 RIVER WOMAN
By Devon Monk
The choices life gives us aren't always easy, but we have to make them nonetheless.

50 THE CHILDREN OF HIS OLD AGE
By Tanith Lee
After years of battle, it can sometimes be hard to recognize the true enemy.

56 HEY HEY SOMETHING SOMETHING
By Jan Lars Jensen
If we think we remember our childhoods, chances are very good we don't.

64 JUDGMENT DAY
By Richard Parks
Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out.

74 SPIRIT STONE
By Naomi Kritzer
Life is hard in the desert. A woman needs all the help she can get.

80 SAVING THE SKYCHILDREN
By Mindy L. Klasky
If astrology were truly destiny, we'd be far different creatures than we are today.

REALMS OF FANTASY (ISSN 1071-1951) is published bimonthly by Sovereign Media Co., Inc., 11305 Sunset Hills Rd., Reston VA 20190 (703) 471-1556. Periodical Rate postage paid at Herndon, VA, and additional mailing offices.

REALMS OF FANTASY, Volume 7, Number 1 © 2000 by Sovereign Media, all rights reserved. Copyrights to stories and illustrations are the property of their creators. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner.

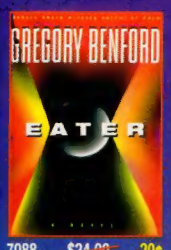
Subscription Services, back issues, and information call 800-219-1187 or write to REALMS OF FANTASY **P.O. Box 1623, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Single copies: $4.00, plus $1 for postage to Sovereign Media. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $16.95; Canada and Overseas: $21.95 (U.S.). Send editorial mail to REALMS OF FANTASY, **P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760.** REALMS OF FANTASY welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Sovereign Media for our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to REALMS OF FANTASY, P.O. Box 1623, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

FORGOTTEN REALMS
Baldur's Gate™ II
Shadows of Amn™
A seed planted with love sometimes blossoms only regret.
Can love survive the struggle between good and evil? This is one of the questions you'll confront in Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn. Immerse yourself in a world of intrigue, adventure and fierce combat where the line between friend and foe is defined only by your instinct and a quick blade. You may discover why some vows are better left unspoken.
Offers single and multiplayer experiences in the sequel to the Roleplaying Game of the Year.
Create a new character or import your Baldur's Gate character into Baldur's Gate II and continue the epic saga.
Encounter hundreds of different types of monsters, thousands of NPCs and over 130 new spells in a huge and intricate world.
New races and character kits such as the Half-Orc, Beastmaster, Undead Hunter and Assassin add to an extensive array of character options.
www.interplay.com / bgate2
Dungeons & Dragons
Developed By BioWare™ Corp
Black Isle Studios
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

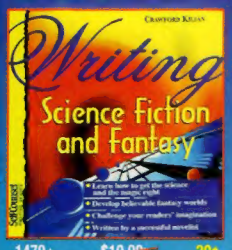
BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN: Developed and ©2000 BioWare Corp. All Rights Reserved. Baldur's Gate, Shadows of Amn, Tales of the Sword Coast, Forgotten Realms, the Forgotten Realms logo, Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, the AD&D logo, and the TSR logo are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and are used by Interplay under license. All Rights Reserved. BioWare, the BioWare logo and the BioWare Infinity Engine are trademarks of BioWare Corp. All Rights Reserved. Black Isle Studios and the Black Isle Studios logo are trademarks of Interplay Entertainment Corp. All Rights Reserved. Exclusively licensed and distributed by Interplay Entertainment Corp. All other trademarks and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

"I challenge you"

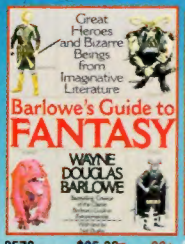
WE PLAY ROUGH OUT HERE IN THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB®



7088 ~~$24.00~~ 20¢



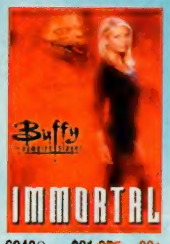
1479+ ~~$10.00x~~ 20¢



0570+ ~~$35.00~~ 20¢

0232 ~~$23.95~~ 20¢

7013 ~~$19.95x~~ 20¢



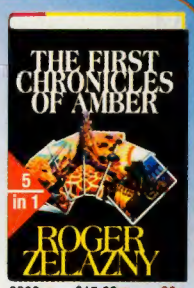
6940Ω ~~$21.95~~ 20¢

6999 ~~$24.95~~ 20¢

6981 ~~$24.95~~ 20¢

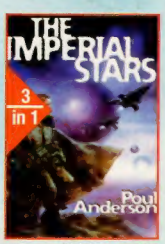
0935 ~~$14.98x~~ 20¢
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy; The Restaurant at the End of the Universe; Life, the Universe and Everything; So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish; Mostly Harmless.

4572 ~~$14.98x~~ 20¢
Three Against the Witch World; Warlock of the Witch World; Sorceress of the Witch World.

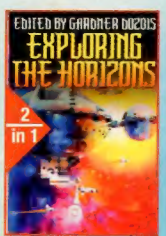


6098 ~~$15.95x~~ 20¢
Nine Princes in Amber; The Guns of Avalon; Sign of the Unicorn; The Hand of Oberon; The Courts of Chaos.

www.joinsfbc.com
Your Online Code is: SH1

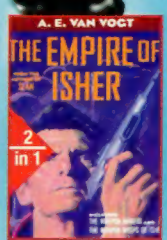


0471 ~~$14.98x~~ 20¢
Ensign Flandry; A Circus of Hells; The Rebel Worlds.



7021 ~~$17.98x~~ 20¢
Explorers; The Furthest Horizons

6197* ~~$40.90~~ 20¢
Faces Under Water; Saint Fire.



0430 ~~$11.98x~~ 20¢
The Weapon Shops of Ishar; The Weapon Makers.

7609* ~~$29.90~~ 20¢
The Book of the Damned; The Book of the Beast.

5264* ~~$30.90~~ 20¢
The Book of the Dead; The Book of the Mad.

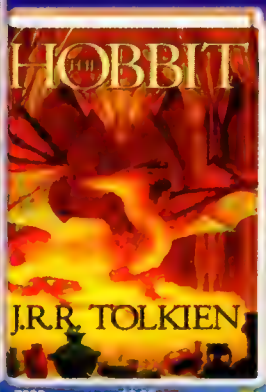
3657 ~~$14.98x~~ 20¢
Pigs Don't Fly; Master of Many Treasures; Dragonne's Eg.

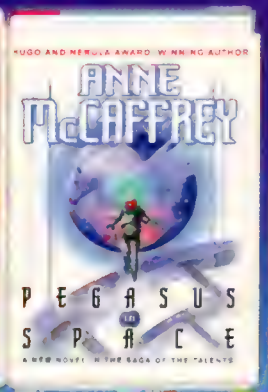
MEMBERSHIP IS EASY: Just choose 5 books for $1. Your bill (including shipping and handling) will come when membership is confirmed. **Your satisfaction is guaranteed.** If you're not happy with your introductory books, return them within 10 days at our expense. Your membership will be canceled; you'll owe nothing. **Save up to 65% off publishers' edition prices.** Every book we offer is a high-quality, full-text edition sometimes altered in size. Just purchase at least 4 more books at regular Club prices within 2 years. (Shipping and handling is added to each order.) After buying 4 books you may resign at any time or remain a member for as long as you wish. **More savings now!** Buy a 6th book now for just $3.98, plus shipping and handling. **The FREE Club magazine** is sent to you up to 19 times a year (about every 3 weeks). Each issue reviews the Main Selections and a variety of alternate books. **Ordering is risk-free.** Main Selections are sent to you automatically. To cancel shipment—or order other books—simply return your Member Reply Form or contact our Web site by the marked date. Shipping and handling (plus sales tax, where applicable) is added to each order. You'll always have 10 days to decide. If your Member Reply Form is late and unwanted books arrive, you can return them *at our expense* and we'll credit your account. **Easy ordering** through the mail or via our Web site: **www.SFBC.com**.

K813

SO WE'LL GIVE YOU A 5 BOOK HEAD START.

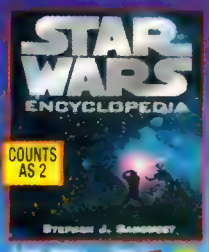
Take 5 books for $1 with membership



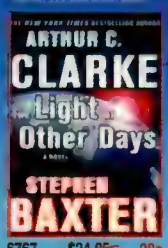


6569 ~~$55.85~~ 20¢
The Fellowship of the Ring; The Two Towers; The Return of the King

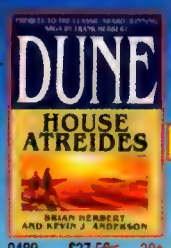
7006 ~~[illegible]~~



7195§ ~~$35.95~~ 20¢



6767 ~~$24.95~~ 20¢

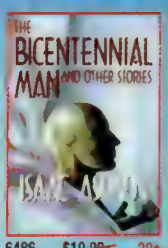


0489 ~~$27.50~~ 20¢

6536 ~~$26.95~~ 20¢

0414 ~~$24.00~~ 20¢

6494 ~~14.98~~ 20¢



6486 ~~$10.98x~~ 20¢

6510* ~~$21.95~~ 20¢

4820 ~~$12.98~~ 20¢

0562 ~~$11.98x~~ 20¢

7161¥ ~~$23.95~~ 20¢

6379-9999≠ ~~$60.00~~ 40¢

0273* ~~$9.00x~~ 20¢

0638 ~~$14.98x~~ 20¢

1412*# ~~$22.90~~ 20¢
Back on the Street; Lust for Life

7187π ~~$27.95~~ 20¢

0646 ~~$19.99~~ 20¢

6817 ~~$25.95~~ 20¢

7153 ~~$26.95~~ 20¢

0455 ~~$25.95~~ 20¢

0364 ~~$24.00~~ 20¢

6965+Δ ~~$24.95~~ 20¢

6478◊ ~~$23.95~~ 20¢

7039 ~~$24.95~~ 20¢

7104 ~~$25.00~~ 20¢

Prices shown were current at press time. *Explicit scenes and/or language
† Non fiction + Softcover edition # Combined publishers' editions
x Hardcover edition exclusively for Club members.

• ™ or ® & © (2000) Lucasfilm Ltd. Title and character and place names protected by all applicable trademark laws. All Rights Reserved. Used Under Authorization. ° © 1998 Lucasfilm Ltd. & ™ (LFL) All Rights Reserved. Used Under Authorization. ¥ Copyright ©2000 Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved. STAR TREK is a Registered Trademark of Paramount Pictures. ≠™ ® & © 1999 Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved. ∑Magic The Gathering is a registered trademark of Wizards of the Coast Inc. All Rights Reserved. ◊ Copyright © 1999 DC Comics. BATMAN and all related titles, characters and indicia are trademarks of DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. ◊ All titles, characters, and related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics. © 1994. All Rights Reserved. Ω © 1999 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Δ Marvel: The Infinity Gauntlet and all characters appearing therein are ™ and © 2000 Marvel characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved. π Dragonlance and DRAGON are registered trademarks of TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. § Illustration by Mary Grand Pré by Scholastic, Inc.

0190*† ~~$21.95~~ 20¢

2881-9999 ~~$25.00~~ 40¢

6759-9999* ~~$17.98x~~ 40¢

2949∑ ~~$22.95~~ 20¢

THE Science Fiction BOOK CLUB

Editorial

Fantasy meets the 21st century (an announcement and a rebuttal).

First the annnouncement: At last, by popular demand, Sovereign Media has put up a Web site. The address is scifinow.com, and on it you will be able to access a whole range of materials dealing with Fantasy and Science Fiction, including (as Becky sighs a huge sigh of relief) the editorial requirements for *RoF*. Any suggestions as to the sort of presence *Realms of Fantasy* should have on the site (aside from posting Fiction from the magazine, which we've already thought of!) will be welcome. The site was up on July 1, and we look forward to your visits.

Second, the rebuttal, which in a weird confluence of science vs. technology, logic vs. mysticism, and Fantasy vs. Science Fiction, ties in nicely with the Web site announcement (get the irony—a Web site for Fantasy?). A Minnesota reader, Justin Alexander, took exception to Mary Helen's Guest Editorial in the last issue, and wrote a well-reasoned letter explaining politely why everything she stood for and believed in was wrong. Since it was too long to run in the letters column, I asked him to expand it a bit so I could run it as this month's Editorial. I think it neatly describes the source of the growing schism between Fantasy and Science Fiction, as well as providing a bit of solid ground for more science-oriented Fantasy readers to stand on. I hope you enjoy it.

There are no Fairies in Kensington Park!

By Jason Alexander

In the August issue, Mary Helen of Iowa, in her Guest Editorial, leaps from one nebulous conclusion to another—building a path of logic that resembles a rickety house of cards more than a reasonable point of view.

The kernel from which she proceeds, of course, is fairly solid. I doubt that any reader of *Realms of Fantasy* would disagree with her contention that no one should ever be bored—that "today should be filled with wonder." Reading Fantasy (and Science Fiction) is a way of adding vistas and stories to your life that could never be experienced in the real world. These stories present us with marvelous tales that enrich our days.

But from here Helen follows her train of thought into unsupportable territory. From the potential joys presented by Fantasy stories she tells us that we should "expand the heart's borders of believability to hold such magic." That we should believe that there truly are fairies in Kensington Park.

I fail to see how she concludes that our lives would be richer if we still believed the flim-flam men who claimed that rickety contraptions of rusted metal could bring rain pouring down from the sky.

The belief that two potatoes stuck under a mattress is as effective as penicillin—that healing traditions built on superstition can function as an acceptable substitute to scientifically proven treatments—is a dangerous one. Helen tells us that "without magic in our culture's realm of believability, creativity suffers." Indeed, the exact opposite is true. Beliefs that are provably false do not foster creativity, they stifle it. If you believe that Daedalus could craft wings of wax and feathers and fly up into the heavens, you do not go looking for airplanes. A belief in a false solution discourages the pursuit of true solutions, and we are made the lesser as a result.

In all of this, what truly baffles me, however, is that Helen's position is almost completely indiscriminate: So long as it is fake, our lives will be better if we believe in it. Why use penicillin? Why use aspirin? There's no Magic there—only Science! Bring on the goop! Bring on the rhymes! Now close your eyes, stop thinking so hard, and swallow this spoonful of Uncle Tom's Miracle Cure!

I do not need to believe that Tolkien's elves live right around the corner in order for the *Lord of the Rings* to fill my day with mystique and joy. Stories of the fantastic expand the horizons that our imaginations explore. And we're all better off with a little bit of "acknowledged" Fantasy in our lives.

But Mary Helen advocates a form of psychosis, and we should not pretend it is anything more than that. By the time she is done, all traces of the worthy point she began with are gone—blotted out by attempting to force the unreal to be real. Bringing fairies and elves and magic into the "realm of believability" is foolishness of the highest order. It turns their potential good into infinite harm.

Speculative fiction as a whole leads us to a plentiful realm of "what if?" It opens our minds to possibilities that have never been thought of before. But if you lose sight of the fact that you are playing with ideas that do not truly exist, then the value is lost.

Fill my days with wonder! Make me dream impossible dreams! Let me see things I will never see in life! Lift me into worlds that may never exist! Do all of this ... but never blur the line between Reality and Fantasy.

Because fiction recognized as fiction is a valuable part of our lives. But fiction mistaken for truth becomes a time bomb waiting to destroy us.

REALMS OF FANTASY

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 1

MARK HINTZ
Publisher

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director

SHAWNA MCCARTHY
Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

DAWN M. STEIN
Associate Art Director

REBECCA MCCABE
Assistant Editor

ALISON CHERRYHOLMES
Assistant Editor

PATRICIA A. ALLEN
LAURA CLEVELAND
Copy Editors

Contributors:
Steven Adler, Eric T. Baker, Charles Demorat, Paul Di Filippo, Heinz Insu Fenkl, Ken Graning, Jan Lars Jenson, Mindy L. Klasky, Naomi Kritzer, Tanith Lee, Devon Monk, Resa Nelson, Richard Parks, John Picacio, Brian Sibley, Franklin Thatcher, Gahan Wilson, Janny Wurts

DIANE BONIFANTI
Business Manager

TINA POUST
Comptroller

AMANDA ZELONES
Finance Manager

CARI WYNNE
Production Assistant

ALI LORAINE
Production Assistant

KATHY PAULHAMUS
MARY NOLAN
SANDRA HILLYARD
Subscription Customer Service

Curtis Circulation Company
Worldwide Distribution

ARTHUR O'HARE
Newsstand Consultant

Advertising Offices:

JOE VARDA
Advertising Director
(703) 733-2160

KELLYE HUXTA
Advertising Coordinator
(703) 733-2171

11305 Sunset Hills Road, Reston, VA 20190
703-471-1556 / FAX: 703-471-1559
E-Mail: sovmedia@erols.com
Subscription Customer Service (800) 219-1187
Penn Tower, Suite 300, 25W. 3rd St.
Williamsport, PA 17701
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

*Now...learn **both** ways to—*

Write for Publication!

IF YOU WANT TO WRITE LIKE A PUBLISHED AUTHOR, begin at the beginning. Start with the same basic elements of fiction and nonfiction used by successful writers, and once you master these basics you can write for any publication that interests you.

You've already seen enough, done enough, experienced enough relationships, and accumulated enough special knowledge and facts to fill a five-foot shelf.

But what you may be lacking are the practical training and professional techniques you need to get it all down on paper and put it across to the toughest of all readers: the editors and publishers who decide what will appear in print.

Where do you turn for help?

Many aspiring writers "go it alone" because they don't know where to turn for help, or because the only help available is in a distant classroom or lecture hall. What most unpublished writers need is "a class of one"—personal, one-on-one instruction from a qualified professional who knows how to break into print—*someone who's done it and been trained to teach **you** how to do it!*

Your personal instructor works with you one-on-one

The challenge was taken up by a group of writers and editors whose personal instruction, by correspondence, over the last 30 years has produced thousands of new authors. The program they developed, *Breaking into Print®*, combines the two most basic forms of creative writing, fiction and nonfiction, in one course! Then, when you're ready, you may choose any writing niche that interests you and we'll teach you how to market to it.

It's a flexible program for busy adults: You work at home—on *your* schedule. You set the pace that's comfortable for you, and your personal instructor—a widely published author of short stories, books, or articles, or an experienced editor—fits his or her schedule to yours. *Breaking into Print* not only teaches you how to write articles and short stories—it also offers you special instruction in the fiction or nonfiction niche that suits your individual goals and interests. It might be mystery, religion, romance, adventure, family, or any other niche—or you may decide to stay with the basic fiction/nonfiction program.

We help you to find your own individual writing niche

Whatever your decision may be, your instructor will stick with you until you graduate, and show you how to market your finished work.

This one-on-one pairing of an aspiring writer with a professional offers you a quality and intensity of training in writing—and marketing your writing—that's simply unavailable in most colleges and universities.

You must qualify for this program

But first, you must pass our Writing Aptitude Test and demonstrate real writing potential. If you have the aptitude to qualify, you'll get our commitment in writing:

Your personal instructor will—

1. Teach you how to write both articles and short stories in one course;
2. Help you to find your writing niche;
3. Show you how to market your writing.

By the time you graduate, you will have written at least two manuscripts that are ready to submit to a publisher.

Learn both ways

There are two main roads to publication: fiction and nonfiction.

You can take a course in fiction and learn how to write short stories.

Then you can take a course in nonfiction and learn how to write articles.

Or, you can take our combined fiction/nonfiction course, *Breaking into Print®*, and learn how to write short stories and articles—and how to market them.

Then, if you wish, you may choose between fiction and nonfiction for the rest of your course.

You save time, save money, and enhance your prospects for getting published.

It's a better way to learn, yes—but you have to *qualify* for this program. To find out how, read on.

Breaking into Print is recommended for college credits by the Connecticut Board for State Academic Awards and approved by the Connecticut Commissioner of Higher Education.

"Thank you for renewing my faith"

"When I received your writing test I figured it was just another scam," writes Chuck Mayer, Clatonia NE, "so I tried to flunk. (I have edited a weekly newspaper for over 20 years and thought I would test your test.) I must admit I was more than just a little surprised when I received your letter telling me I did not qualify. I will long remember Long Ridge Writers Group as a school which can be trusted. Thank you for renewing my faith!"

"...an excellent challenge"

"I had to really structure my thoughts in order to complete your Writing Aptitude Test," reports Lisa Beach, Durham, NC. "It was an excellent challenge."

"Your Writing Aptitude Test was a welcome challenge to me," says Constance Irvin, Coloma, MI. "Too many writing schools do not appear to care if the person can really write."

A "new" method

An important feature of any writing program designed for today's adults is flexibility—not one tied to a fixed classroom routine, but a program that fits their schedules.

Students must also be free to work at their own pace. Yet, their personal writing instructor must always be available to them—responsive and supportive.

These are the hallmarks of *Breaking into Print*, a correspondence learning program offered by Long Ridge Writers Group®.

Correspondence study—established at Yale and the University of Chicago over 100 years ago—is today's "new" method of learning. It's the way more than 3,000,000 busy adults are learning new skills right now!

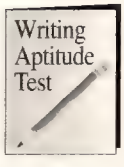
SOURCES: U.S. DEPT. OF EDUCATION AND DISTANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COUNCIL, WASH., DC

Free Writing Aptitude Test and program outline

To identify adults who are qualified for *Breaking into Print,* we offer a free Writing Aptitude Test. To receive your copy, plus a free program outline which introduces you to 30 of our instructors, mail the coupon below.

When you return your test, our staff will evaluate it at no cost to you. If you qualify you'll be eligible to enroll. But that's entirely your decision. *There is no obligation.*

Get both FREE!



Long Ridge Writers Group
91 Long Ridge Road
West Redding, CT 06896-0802

Yes, please send me your Writing Aptitude Test and a brochure describing your combined fiction/nonfiction program.

I understand that if I pass, I may enroll—but I am under no obligation, and no salesperson will visit me.

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss
(PLEASE CIRCLE ONE) **S1048**

PRINT NAME CLEARLY

STREET APT

CITY

STATE ZIP

COPYRIGHT © LRWG 2000, A DIVISION OF THE INSTITUTE, INC.

The students' statements in this ad were provided by them voluntarily, without remuneration, between 1990 and 1999.

Dear *Realms of Fantasy*,

I have been subscribing to *Realms* since its earliest days and will continue to do so as long as you continue to print the kind of excellent fiction you've already selected in many previous issues.

The June 2000 issue was great. Of the five stories offered, only one failed to grab me. Everyone's tastes are different and I think an 80 percent "grab" rate is quite good! The two stories I liked best were Kate Riedel's "The Seventh Sleeper," and Jane Yolen's "Ghost of an Affair." I hope to see more of both writers in your pages. Riedel is a new name to me, but I have long been acquainted with Ms. Yolen's fine work.

I have subscribed at various times to what some call "the big three" SF magazines. *Realms* is the only magazine I have subscribed to for more than three consecutive years since the 1980s, when I subscribed regularly to another magazine edited by Shawna McCarthy (and for a year or so after you left the post, I must admit).

I can understand why some readers would want to see more of the same Fantasy stories that they like in each issue of *Realms*. But theirs is a limited way of thinking. I like to be challenged by a writer, to be so enmeshed in a story that I lose track of time and, if I have to stop reading for a while, hurry back to complete the necessary task so I can take up the story again. *Realms* has consistently provided such fiction almost since its inception. The credit for that success rate must go to you and your long-time assistant editor, Rebecca McCabe—and most recently Alison Cherryholmes.

I thank all three of you for continuing to select thought-provoking, well-crafted fiction. Thanks also to Gahan Wilson for his insightful book reviews—and yes, I do use them to help me in my reading decisions—and to Terri Windling and Heinz Insu Fenkl for their absorbing explorations in "Folkroots." I hope you will continue the Gallery feature as well. It is a pleasure to receive *Realms* in my mailbox. I hope to have that pleasure for many years to come.

Regards,
Jan Stinson
Florida

Thanks for all the kind words—they are certainly noted and appreciated by all!

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

I was delighted with Suzanne Weiner's essay in the June issue of your magazine. I am fully in agreement that the reading material provided for the reluctant student wouldn't tempt anyone who was not already an addict of the printed word. I got shipped off to first grade just before my fifth birthday by a mother who was running out of reading material and patience. I always blamed my younger brother for the lack of patience, of course. Even at that tender age I found Dick and Jane a bunch of tedious bores. I spent a lot of time concocting plots for them involving all sorts of quaint and perilous situations. I realize now that a little girl living in rural New York in the 'thirties had a pretty dim idea of quaint and perilous, but hey—my other reading material was Louisa May Alcott, and my father's old "Boy Scouts On the Wherever," or "Tom Swift and Some Turn-of-the-Century Invention."

But I digress. I meant to direct Suzanne and others to Bailey White's essay "Maritime Disasters" in her collection entitled "Mama Makes Up Her Mind and Other Dangers of Southern Living." In this, she explains her method of teaching reading to first-grade students in southern Georgia. It's a method so obvious (to someone who has associated with small children) that I wonder no one else has caught on. She says that given a disaster sufficiently large and dramatic, she can, in her own words, "teach a half-witted gorilla to read." Her disaster-of-choice when she wrote the essay was the sinking of the *Titanic*. I recommend her books with glee to everyone. They are not books for the action-oriented reader, but at 17 I think Suzanne is mature enough to realize that life is usually long periods of boredom punctuated by intense periods of panic. After reading Bailey's *Mama* she will realize that some people have their own methods of making life interesting.

Thank you for your beautiful magazine. I'm particularly taken by Gahan Wilson's book reviews. I've found them to be right on the mark. His comments on Barbara Hambly's *Knight of the Dragon Queen* explain perfectly why I'm saving the book for those long periods of boredom.

Sincerely yours,
Barbara M. Armistead
San Andreas, CA

Read on for more commentary on Guest Editorialist Suzanne Weiner.

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

I was very touched by Miss Weiner's Editorial for many reasons, but mostly because I am currently in college training to become a high school teacher. Illiteracy is a very scary problem which personally hurts me because I am an avid reader and cannot imagine not having the skills to read. I think Ms. Weiner's idea is a wonderful one. There should be more contemporary literature and "fun" exciting things for children to read instead of a daunting list of classics. After reading some of these so-called classics, one begins to wonder what makes a book a "classic" anyway. The key should be to get students interested about reading at a young age.

However, I do not think this means that children should stop reading classics either. It is amazing how many modern fiction novels, television shows, and movies are adapted from the classics, or based upon their plots and characters. It can be exciting to read a book and actually understand the allusions that an author has placed in his or her book.

I can still remember sitting in the fifth-grade classroom and listening to my teacher read *The Hobbit*. I loved it so much that I went out and bought it and finished it because I had to know what would happen next. This is the excitement that many students are missing in their lives when they go to pick up a book. I understand Ms. Weiner's attachment to Fantasy books and the wonderful worlds they can expose young readers to. I also hope students will give "the classics" a chance when they are studying in school. It may be harder reading and require more on the part of the student, but there will be many tasks and assignments in life that are not ones we choose or cherish. You may be surprised when later in life you find that the *Moby Dick* you hated in high school suddenly becomes your favoirte novel in college.

Best Wishes,
Maria Emmons
Canton, OH

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

First of all, I want to thank you for printing my entry. I had not expected to see my name when I opened the magazine to find out who the second runner-up was! I am not sure whether my mother or I was more excited. My father was also pleased. His comment was, "Maybe now that it's published, you'll let me read it." Secondly, I would like to mention that my Editorial was very out of date. I wrote it before I entered my Advanced Placement English class, which has been fascinating beyond measure both for the books we've read and for the teacher. There is still hope for American public education! My faith has been restored … somewhat. Also, congratulations to Scott Fleming for his winning entry. Overall, another fabulous issue. This magazine has never failed to amaze me with its consistently stellar standards. Keep up the wonderful work!

Your avid fan,
Suzanne Weiner

Your letters are welcome. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, Realms of Fantasy, P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet, E-mail to: shawnam896@aol.com

From the Master of Fantasy Art Boris Vallejo

The Winged Temptress Art Knife

Strictly Limited Edition

From the imagination of acclaimed fantasy artist Boris Vallejo, an intriguing dagger of incomparable beauty and collector appeal. Sensuously sculpted in the image of a voluptuous winged woman. Her face is mesmerizing...her body superb. And the intricate wings which make her a true fantasy apparition are testimony to the fine workmanship of this rare piece. Crafted from stainless steel, fine pewter and accented with 24 karat gold.

Payable in five monthly installments of $19.50

The Noble Collection

www.noblecollection.com

1-800-866-2538

Instant Order Code = RF9A

Product Code = ND0880

PLEASE MAIL BY OCTOBER 31, 2000

The Noble Collection

P.O. Box 1476, Sterling, VA 20167

Please enter my order for the Winged Temptress Art Knife. I need SEND NO MONEY NOW. I will be billed in five monthly installments of $19.50*. The 1st payment due prior to shipment.

Name

Address

City State Zip

Phone ( )

Signature

*Plus $4.50 for shipping & handling. Sales tax will be billed if applicable. All orders are subject to acceptance and availability.

RF9A - ND0880

BY GAHAN WILSON

A young reader's edition of fairy tales transcends nursery room pallor.

EDITED BY ELLEN DATLOW AND TERRI WINDLING, *A WOLF AT THE DOOR AND OTHER Retold Fairy Tales*, (Simon & Schuster NY, NY; 166 pages; hardcover; $16.00) is another in the marvelous series of collections of stories based on classic fairy tales that have been inspired and collected by the formidable team of Datlow and Windling, but unlike all the previous collections (unless one snuck by me), this anthology has been brought out under the banner of the "Books for Young Readers" section of Simon & Schuster and is, therefore, quite unlike its predecessors since it is officially exclusively aimed at children.

Of course that brings the book right back into the same odd and decidedly foggy area of controversy from which the whole series originally emerged, since one of the essential motivators that drove Datlow and Windling to start the series in the first place and the one they used to lure in and encourage the authors they wanted to participate in the experiment, was that fairy stories had been way too long banished from their original audience—which was universal and had no age restrictions whatsoever—and imprisoned henceforth to the confines of the nursery where the poor things were bowdlerized and rendered cute as quickly as possible in order that the babes and children would not be exposed to anything sensible and relevant during their tender years and thereby become prematurely dangerous to adults.

Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling put a different spin on classic fairy tales in their anthology, A Wolf at the Door.

Datlow and Windling's basic notion—and an excellent one it was and is—was to reconnect fairy tales to the real-live world from which they had been surgically removed; to give them back their gonads and sweat glands; to let them once more be a marvelous and unmatched means of exposing humanity's astounding foolishness, occasional heroism, all too rare insight, and almost perpetual confusion by the simple expedient of taking an unblinkered look at our kind through the eyes of Puck and Queen Mab.

I see some of you have grown pale and nervous so let me hasten to reassure you by passing on the happy news that Simon & Schuster's sinister plot to resubvert the fairy tale has failed dismally. I know this from personal experience since I read the book halfway through in the form of an advance review copy completely under the impression that it was the same as all the prior anthologies—written for adults—and it was not until I had a clarifying chat with one of the editors that the "Young Readers" label was pointed out to me.

Being a conscientious reviewer I immediately reread what I'd read before prior to perusing the rest of the volume, and observed in the light of this new knowledge that, yes, indeed, it was not all that difficult to see that the editors *had* gone at their assignment in a subtly different mood from that pervading their earlier adult anthologies but—and this is my defense—that they had met the task with their usual skill, superb taste, and derring-do and so no harm whatsoever had been done and even a trained book reviewer such as myself might be excused for having missed their subtly altered angle of attack.

The references and images, for instance, are on the

THE ELUSIVE UNICORN

You'd have to search the world over to assemble a collection like this. Introducing an unprecedented collection authenticated by world-renowned unicorn expert, David Cornell.

For centuries, the unicorn has captured the imagination of poets and kings...artists and minstrels. Now, the elusive unicorn's majestic spirit is captured for the *first* time in an original collection authenticated by renowned unicorn expert David Cornell. Intricately sculptured. Superbly crafted. Created in the world's most beautiful artistic traditions... Satsuma style, Pastel Porcelain style, Russian Lacquer style and more. Many painted and decorated by hand with radiant accents of *silver* and *24 karat gold*. Specially imported.

The Collector's Treasury of Unicorns. Available *only* from The Franklin Mint for $37.50 each, display included at no additional cost.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

If you wish to return any Franklin Mint purchase, you may do so within 30 days of your receipt of that purchase for replacement, credit or refund.

Shown actual size.

Display shown smaller than actual size of 23" (58.42 cm) in height.

The Franklin Mint
Franklin Center, PA 19091-0001

Please enter my order for The Collector's Treasury of Unicorns, a collection of twelve sculptures authenticated by David Cornell.

I need SEND NO MONEY NOW. I will receive one sculpture per month and will be billed just $37.50* prior to its shipment.

**Plus my state sales tax and $3.95 per sculpture for shipping and handling.*

SIGNATURE _____
ALL ORDERS ARE SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE.

Hand-painted accents of 24 karat gold adorn this charming Irish-style collector's treasure.

Please mail by November 30, 2000.

MR/MRS/MISS _____
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

ADDRESS _____ APT. # _____

CITY/STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE # (_____) _____

14794-190-001

THE FRANKLIN MINT
www.franklinmint.com

MAN OF TWO WORLDS
MY LIFE IN SCIENCE FICTION AND COMICS
JULIUS SCHWARTZ
WITH BRIAN M. THOMSEN
AFTERWORD BY HARLAN ELLISON

whole a tad less world weary; there is a bit more word play of the gamin-esque variety and, very astutely, there are no characters supporting a hard drug habit, producing porno films, or engaged in Mafia-inspired stock manipulations.

But fear not, dear readers, the points made are just as sharp as in the previous collections and the quality is every bit as high.

Also, as is usual with a Datlow-Windling collaboration, picking and choosing favorites is misleading since the level throughout is so high, but here are a few you might furtively read before the rest if you're browsing in a comfortable chair in a large chain bookstore and not actually planning on buying:

"Cinder Elephant" by Jane Yolen is a hilarious and extremely touching gem based on Cinderella which, among its other highly laudable achievements, atomizes the Disney version with impeccable ruthlessness (being particularly hard on the sweet little birdies) and gives us, in my humble opinion, the absolutely most ridiculously funny spin on the glass-slipper notion accomplished so far by humanity.

Delia Sherman finally does what I have been waiting and waiting for some Fantasy author to do in "The Months of Manhattan," which is to use New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art as a locale for a Fantasy, and in the process offer a little moral which without doubt could make this a far better world if the children this book is supposedly aimed at will absorb it along with any adults caught in its path.

Patricia A. McKillip offers an as exquisitely honed fairy tale as one could wish in "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." Its images truly evoke the magic of the fey being at the same time ghastly enough to chill your bones and sweet enough to make your eyes tear and you will find your mind drifting over them unexpectedly for a long time after you've put it down, or at least that has been my personal experience.

"Instructions" by Neil Gaiman is a charming guide to reading of and/or visiting fairyland written in the form of a poem which I think may be one of the best things of his I've read which is, of course, saying quite a lot.

I can't think of a better way to finish—and have no intention of trying to—than by quoting a few of the wiser bits of advice, though you really should read the others as soon as possible:

"... if any creature tells you that it hungers,
feed it.
If it tells you that it is dirty,
clean it.
If it cries to you that it hurts,
If you can,
ease its pain."

...

"Trust the wolves, but do not tell them where you are going."

...

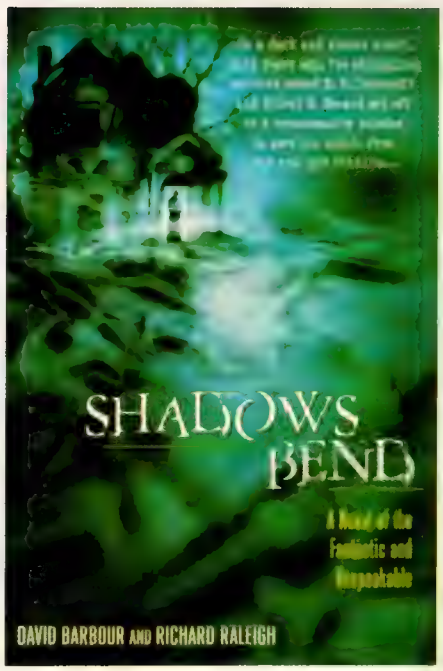
"Remember your name.
Do not lose hope—what you seek will be found.
Trust ghosts. Trust those you have helped to help you in their turn.
Trust dreams.
Trust your heart and trust your story."

There's no telling what area of the fantastic Will Shetterly will take it into his head to explore next; this time he's decided to play with the private-eye notion and has done so in ***Chimera*** *(Tor Books, NY, NY; 288 pages; hardcover; $23.95)* with his usual sense of fun and imagination.

Chimera also does some fairly serious mulling over what may be only a few short turns down the road for both us humans and for our so far unsuspecting animal companions once scientists and corporation executives and the lawyers representing the whole pack of them get past the present early stages of genetic manipulation and their legal complications.

It turns out that Shetterly, along with a growing number of us nonscientist, noncorporate-executive types, is not overly optimistic as to the likely eventualities. His projections seem to be largely based on humanity's sorry past history in this area, which pretty clearly indicates that our noticeable and persistent tendency to exploit one another is surpassed in its cruelty and thoughtlessness only by our casual and brutal treatment of our fellow mammals which we tend to view—save for a few fortunate creatures we've decided to designate as pets—with about the same tenderness and consideration we show rocks and trees as we process them into concrete and lumber.

Of course, since Shetterly is playing the P.I.-novel game fair and square, these notions do not display themselves in an orderly fashion and with academic grace but unroll explosively and violently in an atmosphere packed with considerable menace.



His rough and tough detective hero is Chase ("call me Max") Maxwell and we first come across him betting over his head in a game of seven card stud at the Wonderland Casino in the Crittertown area of Los Angeles, which is probably not as far away in our future as we would wish it to be.

The means to raise his ante sidles up to him in the person of Zoe Domingo, a would-be client who appears to be a beautiful woman but who is revealed only a few pages later to be a chimera who is largely leopard (note her ability to sheath and unsheathe her long talons!) but who has concealed the legally required ID tattooed on her forehead with makeup in order to foil the gambling casino's policy against accepting clientele who have been genetically shuffled.

One thing rapidly follows another and soon both Max and Zoe find themselves engaged in violent combat with a trio of Chimera bouncers—one part black doberman, the second part polar bear, and the third (and, I confess, my particular favorite) who is named Rashid and who is part orca with a shiny round head, a squeaky voice, and many, many sharp whale teeth sparkling in his widely spreading grin—and then hauled off to the central LA police station by a combination of human cops and nasty little copbots for a severe and prolonged questioning.

I've no intention of spoiling any major surprises, but I think it's fair to mention that the plot is driven by such interestingly varied events as the murder of a prominent nonhuman rights activist by a rogue bot, by mysterious doings on the Part of UNSEC (United Nations Security) and by a sudden and inexplicable and extremely gory outbreak of much Werewolfing on the part of colorfully diverse Chimera, each one giving its own special genetic flourish to the phenomenon of mass murder.

'SECTS, BUGS & LOCK 'N LOAD!

STARSHIP TROOPERS™

TERRAN ASCENDANCY

The Terran paradise of Buenos Aires has been annihilated by a guided meteorite! Federal Intelligence has established the source of the meteorite as Klendathu, home world of the Arachnids.! It's time to earn your place in the human race. Command a crew of heavily-armored, totally insecticidal troopers throughout a blistering real-time strategy trial-by-fire. Launch air-strikes, capture prisoners, and nuke bug-holes as you face off against vicious bug battalions - including Tanker Bugs, Hopper bugs, and of course, Brain Bugs. Answer the call! Defend your planet! Destroy all insects!

Swarms Of Giant Arachnids!

State-Of-The-Art Military Technology!

Customize Mission Teams!

For the 3D accelerated combat

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

bluetongue

HASBRO Interactive

Starship Troopers: TM & © 2000 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. All Rights Reserved. © 2000 Hasbro Interactive, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Also, in order to whet your appetite, let me cite a tiny few of the things and events Mr. Shetterly sees lurking only a few decades ahead: There will be PERTS, or Personal Rapid Transportation Stations, where you can rent a neat little flying box to zip you where you want to go; television will become Holovision and referred to as FW (I figure that hits in about 10 years); there will be decarcinized cigarettes known as nic sticks; genomeries will thrive and produce large quantities of Chimera for every taste and use, moral and immoral, but Minnesota (bless its old-timey liberal traditions) will stand up and pass laws declaring their products to have human rights and—I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of you haven't seen this one coming—human beings will finally stop trying to participate in chess championships and leave it to the machines.

Oh, and you'll also discover what an "infinite pocket" is!

The Editorial Director of this magazine, Carl Gnam himself, figuratively (you can't do it any other way if you're on the phone) waved ***Shadows Bend*** *(by David Barbour and Richard Raleigh; Ace Books NY, NY; 320 pages; softcover; $13.00)* temptingly before me, intoning as he did so the tripart names of Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Robert Ervin (you can see why it's usually just E.) Howard, and Clark Ashton Smith and asked me if I would possibly be interested in reviewing a novel featuring the *Weird Tales* three musketeers as the heroes of the book.

Of course he knew I could not resist the lure, he was actually doing me a favor, and when the manuscript arrived I sat and read it and found I enjoyed it, so here I am reviewing it.

The authors have obviously been scrupulously careful in researching their subjects, not just by reading books—though they clearly have relied heavily, as they say in their Afterword, on the biographies by L. Sprague DeCamp and a good deal of DeCamp's head shaking about the oddities of H.P.L. and Howard does show through—but by interviewing people who knew them such as Smith's friend George Haas, for example, who told them many details regarding C.A.S's cabin near Auburn, and that also shows and I was delighted to see it. Mostly what gives the book its touching charm is the obvious love Barbour and Raleigh have for their three brilliant and eccentrical heroes.

Shadows Bend starts appropriately enough with Lovecraft suffering one of his gaudy nightmares, this one induced by the bumping and other discomforts produced by a rattly bus—including a baby mercilessly howling a few rows off—which he is riding along a third-rate road toward Robert E. Howard's home in Cross Plains, Texas.

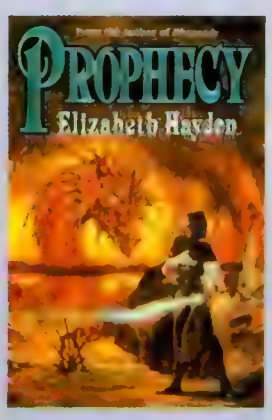
The dream works the crying infant into its scenario, the child turns into a monster with a dangerously large, sexually suggestive gelatinous mouth (there is throughout the book a freewheeling, surrealistic quality about the fantastic images evoked which I found always enjoyable), and this wakes our hero just in time to observe his entry into the unimpressive environs of Cross Plains.

The bus driver gives him a farewell more than a touch reminiscent of the one given by the coachman in *Dracula* dropping Jonathan Harker at the Borgo Pass, and soon H.P.L. finds himself scrambling through a proper Lovecraftian storm complete with lightning and king-sized balls of hail as he makes his way along a circuitous and way over-long route from the town to Howard's house which was given to him by a local rube he had offended by using too many five-dollar words and otherwise being fancy.

BOOKS TO WATCH FOR

Brightly Burning: A Novel of Valdemar, by Mercedes Lackey, DAW, hardcover, $24.95. This is the legendary story of Herald Lavan Firestorm. A gifted youth is trained by three very special individuals … one Healer, one Herald, and one companion. The son of Archer and Nelda Chitward, young Lavan is both blessed and cursed with the gift of firestarting. This much-awaited return to the celebrated Valdemar series is a triumphant one. *New York Times* best-selling author Lackey creates another compelling-Fantasy classic!

Prophecy, by Elizabeth Hayden, Tor, hardcover $29.95. A powerful sequel to the Fantasy saga begun in *Rhapsody*. Rhapsody, Achmed, and Grunther have formed a bond and fellowship that will withstand the forces of an ancient evil. The three heroes must overcome the destruction of their homeland and the time passage of 14 centuries. Rhapsody is called upon to rescue the leader of her new homeland while



Achmed and Grunther search for the F'dor. A bright and shining tale that feels both comfortingly familiar and excitingly original. Readers of *Prophecy* will wait in serious anticipation for the conclusion to this trilogy.

Daughter of the Forest, by Juliet Marillier, Tor, hardcover, $25.95. First-

time author Marillier tells the tale of Lord Colum of Sevenwaters and his six sons and one daughter. Replete with an evil stepmother, brothers-turned-to-swans, and Sorcha, the sister who must release her brothers from the spell even as she protects her land from invaders—this novel will delight and astound. An exceptional debut fairy tale that mixes romance, legend, and magic.

Return to Gone-Away, by Elisabeth Enright, Harcourt Young Classics/Odyssey, hardcover, $17.00. A beautiful sequel to the Newbery Honor book called *Gone-Away Lake*. This tale will enthrall readers both young and young at heart. Enter Portia and a tumble-down Victorian lake house. Villa Caprice, as the house Portia and her parents move into is known—is a house filled with both secrets and treasure. A funny and charming tale that cannot be surpassed.

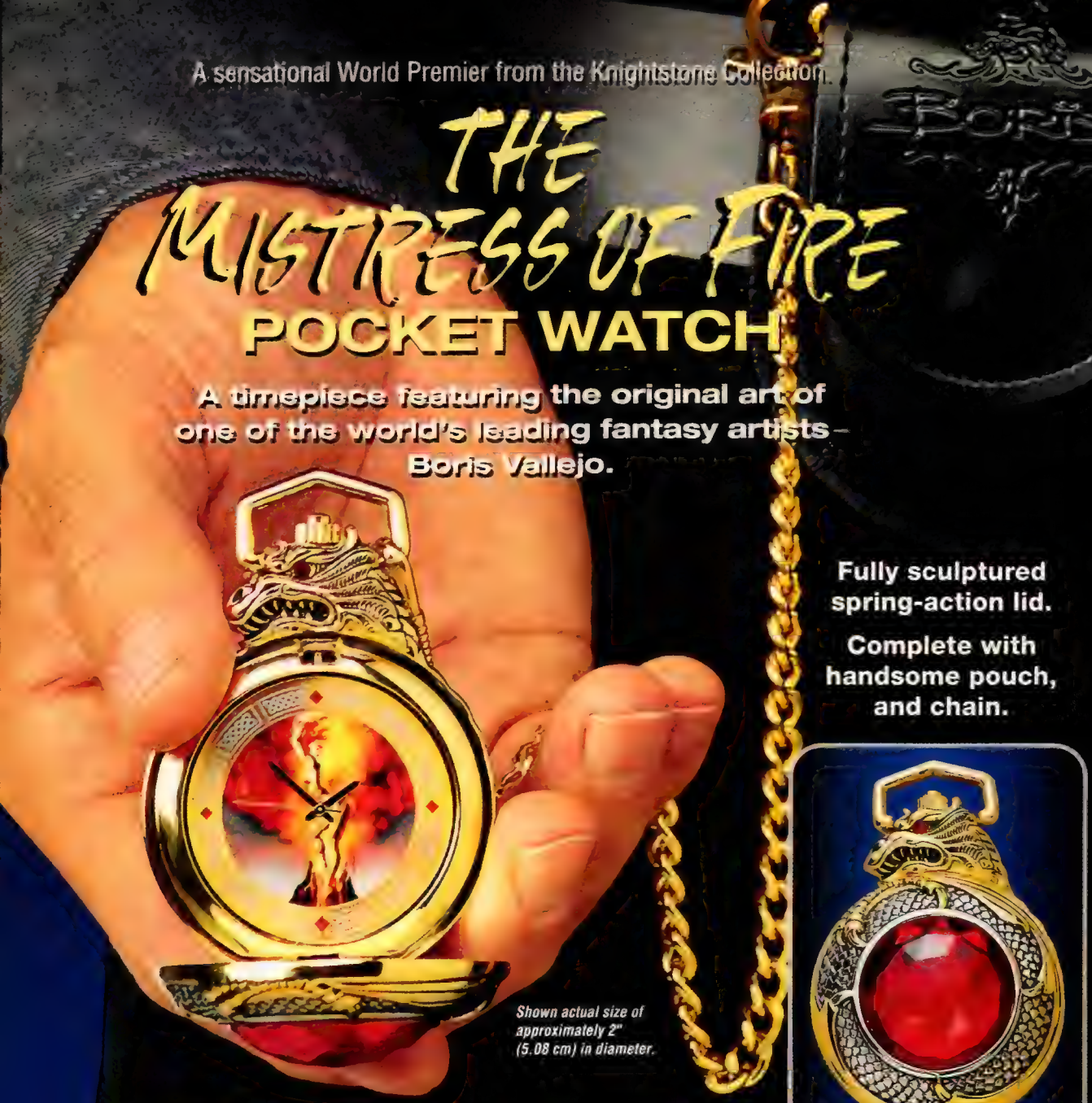
The Tower at Stony Wood, by Patricia A. McKillip, Ace, hardcover $22.95. A magical tale of false queens, dangerous quests, and a knight of Gloinmere named Cyan Dag … this compelling work by World Fantasy Award Winner McKillip is sure to please lovers of classical Fantasy and those readers truly in need of adventure. During the wedding of the king, a glimpse into the true and frightening

identity of the creature posing as "queen" is revealed to Cyan Dag. His quest must be to rescue the real queen and to prevent the outbreak of war. Elegant prose and a captivating story await those who choose to revel in this story—as they surely will.

A sensational World Premier from the Knightstone Collection.

THE MISTRESS OF FIRE POCKET WATCH

A timepiece featuring the original art of one of the world's leading fantasy artists – Boris Vallejo.



Shown actual size of approximately 2" (5.08 cm) in diameter.

Fully sculptured spring-action lid.

Complete with handsome pouch, and chain.

Dramatically accented in 24 karat gold and sterling silver.

Powered by a precision quartz movement.

Boris Vallejo. One of the most widely collected fantasy artists of our time. The creator of a world where your wildest of dreams come true. Now, Boris conquers the dimension of time, with the creation of his first-ever pocket watch. A bold, provocative work with The Mistress of Fire captured in a memorable portrayal on the dial face. The intricately sculptured spring-activated lid depicts a fierce dragon, his eye ablaze with a fiery red crystal cabochon. He clutches a larger stone hand set in the middle of the lid. The lid, frame, stem and bail are rich with accents of 24 karat gold. And the minted medal of Knightstone Collections is set into the reverse of the watch. Let this beauty light your fire for just $69.

THE KNIGHTSTONE GUARANTEE. If, for any reason, you are not completely satisfied with your purchase, simply return it to us within 30 days for replacement, credit or refund.

Please mail by November 30, 2000.

Knightstone Collections
One Tower Road • Media PA 19063-5711

Yes! Enter my order for The Mistress of Fire, Boris Vallejo's first-ever pocket watch.

No payment is required now. I will be billed in 2 equal monthly installments of $34.50* each, with the first payment due when my watch is ready to be sent.

**Plus my state sales tax and a one-time charge of $3.95 for shipping and handling.*

SIGNATURE _____
ALL ORDERS ARE SUBJECT TO ACCEPTANCE

MR/MRS/MISS _____
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

ADDRESS _____ APT # _____

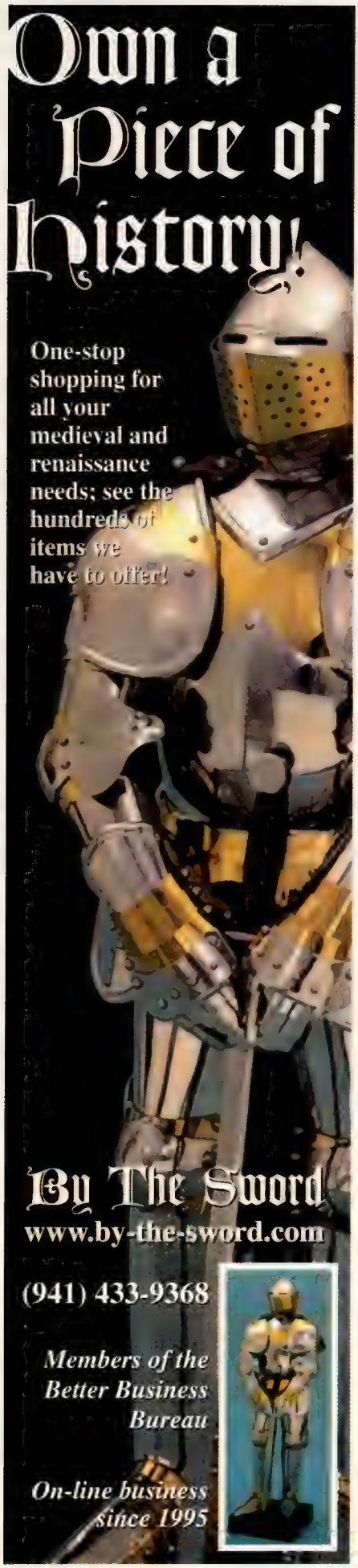
CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE # (_____) _____

22179-100-01

KNIGHTSTONE COLLECTIONS


Own a Piece of History!
One-stop shopping for all your medieval and renaissance needs; see the hundreds of items we have to offer!
By The Sword
www.by-the-sword.com
(941) 433-9368
Members of the Better Business Bureau
On-line business since 1995

Of course H.P.L. and Howard never did meet in real life, mostly for the pathetic reason that they were too poor to afford the transportation. Barbour says wanting to describe that meeting was the main thing that got him started on the project and I admit it may have been the main reason I took up the book. It's something a lot of people wish had happened and something I wanted to see at least a version of.

The plot of the book is essentially an odd and not-at-all-unpleasing variant on the buddy movie wherein two loyal chums take on some oversized menace. In this case there is a vast and mysterious Cthulhulian threat looming which H.P.L. believes may be stoppered—by the way, the weakest part of the book is its failure to clearly and convincingly show how very difficult it would certainly have been for the profoundly skeptical Lovecraft to find himself transformed into a paranoid believer in the ghouls and monsters featured in his fiction—if he and Howard trek west to Auburn, California where abides the third great *Weird Tales* writer, Clark Ashton Smith, since it seems the great poet has come across a copy of a grimoire bound in human skin and bone which has turned out to be—what else?—nothing less than the fabled Necronomicon.

The two of them set out on this quest and are soon joined, for reasons I will allow the readers to find out for themselves, by Miss Gloria "Glory" McKenna, an extremely attractive and highly intelligent woman with flaming red hair. It was wise of Barbour and Raleigh to have added her to the mix as it tames and provides a counter thrust to their broad depiction of the two eccentric authors which otherwise might have eventually ended up by turning them into a kind of Laurel and Hardy team, although the simple truth probably is that if these two remarkably eccentric men had managed to get together they would most certainly have formed a duo rife with comic possibilities!

So it's Westward Ho! for the trio and soon they find themselves involved in diversely interesting encounters with a Hopi shaman instructing them how to explore a triplex kiva with sand paintings, bat-winged Night Gaunts attempting to tear a Las Vegas suburb apart with their gigantic ebon claws and their eventful visit with Clark Ashton Smith.

All in all, for those interested in this sort of thing, I think that since *Shadows Bend* helped me to pass a pleasantly lazy day in late spring it would also make for very nice summer or autumnal reading, depending on when this issue of *Realms* decides to come out.

I'll freely admit that adding ***Man of Two Worlds, My Life in Science Fiction and Comics***, by Julius Schwartz *(with Brian M. Thomsen, Afterword by Harlan Ellison; Harper Entertainment, NY, NY; 197 pages; trade paperback; $14.00)* to the column is in large part self-indulgence since I've known Julie for what has now become a shocking number of years, but it is also completely legitimate to include this entertaining biography in a review of books about Fantasy since Julie was agent to such giants in that field as Ray Bradbury, H.P. Lovecraft, Alfred Bester, and Robert Bloch; was an early inspiration and guru to the creators of both Batman and Superman when he essentially created the structure of Fantasy fandom and the fanzines that still promote it, and was the good gray eminence presiding over what has eventually come to be known as the "Silver Age" of comic bookdom.

If you're interested in any of the above this unpresumptuous little book will provide you with enough boiled-down information on all those topics to write any number of learned articles on them (and will doubtless be often utilized in such a fashion) not to mention all sorts of juicy little bits of dish which, if you drop them judiciously at your next Fantasy or Science Fiction convention, will cause folk to wonder—perhaps even a little nervously—at the profundity of your inside knowledge.

Most importantly *Man of Two Worlds* will introduce you to someone you'll be happy to meet.

Gahan Wilson

A Trip to the Stars, *by Nicholas Christopher, Dial, 499 pages, hardcover, $24.95*

Any reader who has ever enjoyed the work of Tim Powers, John Crowley, or Lisa Goldstein will immediately fall in love with the latest novel by Nicholas Christopher, *A Trip to the Stars*. Christopher's finely crafted brand of "urban magical realism" offers moral depth, charming flights of fancy, philosophical musings, humor, tragedy, and hard-earned redemption, without a trace of condescension to the genre or an ounce of literary snobbishness.

Beginning his career as a poet (his enigmatic novella in verse, *Desperate Characters*, from 1988, offers an intriguing bridge between his two modes), Christopher offered us a first novel that barely hinted at the path he was later to take. A captivating character study of a master pianist with a complex love life, *The Soloist* (1986) remained rather stolidly mimetic (except when it touched on an apocryphal piece of music and a weird brand of psychoanalysis). But with *Veronica* (1996), Christopher colorfully burst out into mystical George MacDonald territory. This engrossing, uncanny tale of rival magicians—whose battle brings together the titular daughter of one mage and the hapless narrator named Leo—also recalled Christopher Priest's *The Prestige* (1995) in limning a world where the borderline between dreams and reality is permeable and shifting.

In his latest book, Christopher, by cross-cutting first-person narratives, brilliantly conveys the parallel life stories of Enzo Samax

Continued on page 92

A kiss is no longer *just* a kiss....

A KISS OF SHADOWS

LAURELL K. HAMILTON

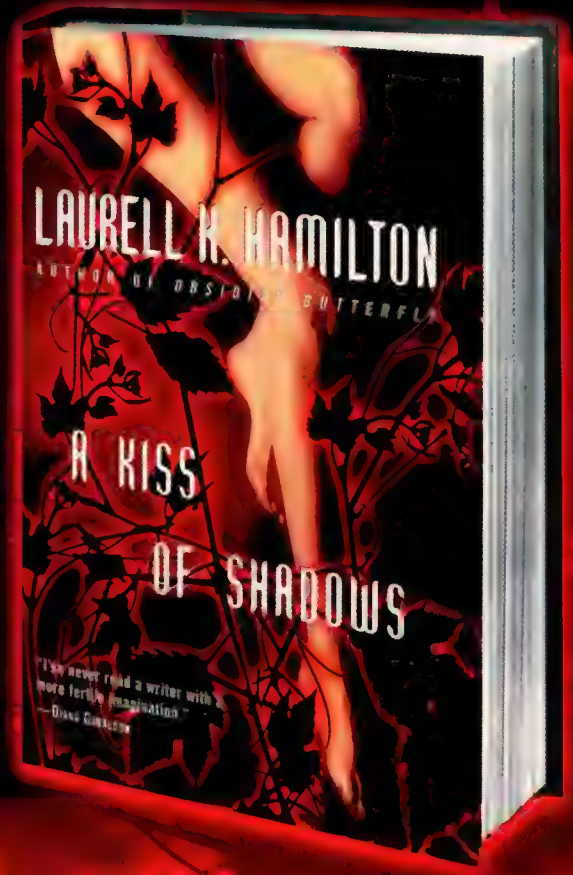
In fact, nothing is quite what it seems in the world of Meredith Gentry. She's an L.A. private eye with a strange specialty—supernatural crime—and a stranger secret: she's a fairy princess in disguise, and on the run from her own otherworldly realm...where dark and deadly forces wait eagerly to welcome her home.

A sexy, suspenseful, spellbinding new novel from the nationally bestselling author of the "erotic, edgy, red-hot"* Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter series.

"I've never read a writer with a more fertile imagination."
—*Diana Gabaldon*

"A wonderful excursion into the magic of desire."
—Alice Borchardt, author of *Night of the Wolf*

"She blends the genres of romance, horror, and adventure with stunning panache."
*—Jayne Ann Krentz



A Ballantine Hardcover
On sale October 31

Ballantine Books
www.laurellkhamilton.com

CHALLENGE FATE
20 YEARS HAVE ELAPSED SINCE THE EVENTS OF CHRONO TRIGGER™ NOW A NEW SET OF ADVENTURERS PREPARE FOR A BATTLE THAT WILL SURPASS EVEN SPACE AND TIME

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Violence
Mild Language

© 2000 Square Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. SQUARE SOFT and the SQUARESOFT logos are registered trademarks of Square Co., Ltd. Chrono Trigger and Chrono Cross are trademarks of Square Co., Ltd. PlayStation and the PlayStation logos are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

SQUARESOFT®

www.squaresoft.com

Published by Square Electronic Arts L.L.C.

PlayStation®

BY RESA NELSON

Fall 2000 TV preview: A look into new and returning shows.

THE NEW TV SEASON PROMISES A WEALTH OF FANTASY, RANGING FROM PURE SWORD & sorcery to witches and vampires to the paranormal. As each year goes by, the smaller cable networks, as well as syndication, provide offerings of Fantasy series that are smart, well conceived, and pretty to look at. In fact, there's a trend in the making: Look first at the syndicated and small-network shows for the best quality—after all, they're less encumbered than the major network shows that are under the censors' thumbs.

The new fall season kicks off with six brand-new Fantasy series, with more waiting in the wings as mid-season replacements. Old favorites are returning, and some of the most promising are Fantasy shows that have shown their freshman colors and are gearing up for their 2nd seasons. But let's look at the new series first.

The most promising new shows this fall are slated on Fox. *Freakylinks* is a drama that combines the talents of writer Gregg Hale (producer of *The Blair Witch Project*), executive producer Tommy Thompson (*The Pretender, Quantum Leap*), and writer David Goyer (*Blade, The Crow: City of Angels*)—and combines television with the Internet, much as *The Blair Witch Project* utilized the Net to promote movie attendance. *Freakylinks* focuses on Derek Barnes, a Web master in Florida who runs FreakyLinks.com, an underground Web site that exists to debunk the paranormal. One day, Derek receives an E-mail message that includes images showing that Adam, the twin brother he thought was dead, is actually still alive. Determined to find out what's going on, Derek joins forces with Adam's former fiancé, Chloe. Together they delve into a strange subculture of the paranormal.

Here's the kicker. The Web site, www.FreakyLinks.com, actually exists as a means for viewers to submerse themselves in the mythology of the series.

RIGHT: Darien (Vincent Ventresca) struggles between good and evil as the Invisible Man. *BELOW: Eve's destiny will be revealed on* Xena: Warrior Princess *this season.*

Fox is also home for the new series *Night Visions*, an anthology fashioned after *The Twilight Zone*. Each *Night Visions* story is intended to be a stand-alone vignette, and episodes will range from Horror to psychological drama to supernatural adventure. The premiere episode stars Aidan Quinn as Jeremy Bell, an overstressed official investigating a plane crash. As he learns about the victims of the crash, a strange pattern begins to unfold. Bell is aboard a flight himself and realizes that this, in fact, may be the doomed flight—and he has to figure out how to convince the pilot before it's too late.

If you're an X-Phile, you may want to give its spinoff series, *The Lone Gunmen*, a try. The bizarre combination consists of Byers (played by Bruce Harwood, the well-dressed one in the business suit), Langly (played by Dean Haglund, the long-haired blond who looks like a refugee from the 1960s), and Frohike (played by Tom Braidwood, who has been pulling double duty as the creepy one who lusts after Scully in addition to his real-life job as the first assistant director on *The X-Files*). They made their first appearance in the episode "E.B.E." during the 1st season of *The X-Files*, and were so well received by viewers that they won a recurring spot.

The computer-hacking conspiracy freaks publish "The Lone Gunman" newsletter and have helped Mulder and Scully out of numerous scrapes. But now, backed by the long-time *X-Files* team

3x3 EYES

Open your eyes to the world of shadows lurking beneath the surface of our reality!

Poor Yakumo - No one chooses "Zombie" for their career goal . . .

August Releases

Amazing Nurse Nanako - Memories of You V.1	DVD	$29.98
Amazing Nurse Nanako - Memories of You V.1	VHS-Dub	$24.98
Amazing Nurse Nanako - Memories of You V.1	VHS-Sub	$24.98
Fushigi Yugi – The Fading Light V.15	VHS-Dub	$24.98
Fushigi Yugi – The Fading Light V.15	VHS-Sub	$29.98
Key the Metal Idol V.1	DVD	$29.98
Nazca - Eternal Power V.4	DVD	$29.98
Nazca - Eternal Power V.4	VHS-Dub	$24.98
Nazca - Eternal Power V.4	VHS-Sub	$29.98
Panda! Go Panda!	DVD	$24.98
Panda! Go Panda!	VHS-Dub	$14.98
Pokemon - Our Hero Meowth V.19	DVD	$24.98
Pokemon - Our Hero Meowth V.19	VHS-Dub	$14.98
Pokemon - The Final Badge V.20	DVD	$24.98
Pokemon - The Final Badge V.20	VHS-Dub	$14.98
Tenchi Universe - On Earth II V.2	DVD	$29.98
Trigun - Wolfwood V.3	DVD	$29.98
Trigun - Wolfwood V.3	VHS-Dub	$24.98
Trigun - Wolfwood V.3	VHS-Sub	$29.98

September Releases

3x3 Eyes - Immortals V.1	VHS-Dub	$34.98
3x3 Eyes - Immortals V.1	VHS-Sub	$34.98
Fushigi Yugi – The Last Page V.16	VHS-Dub	$24.98
Fushigi Yugi – The Last Page V.16	VHS-Sub	$29.98
Sailor Moon - Black Dream Hole (SS Movie)	DVD	$29.98
Sailor Moon - Black Dream Hole (SS Movie)	VHS-Dub	$14.98
Key the Metal Idol V.2	DVD	$29.98
Miffy - Miffy at the Zoo V.2	VHS-Dub	$12.98
Sol Bianca - The Legacy - Separation V.2	DVD	$29.98
Sol Bianca - The Legacy - Separation V.2	VHS-Dub	$24.98
Sol Bianca - The Legacy - Separation V.2	VHS-Sub	$29.98
Tenchi Universe - On Earth III V.3	DVD	$29.98

Double Cassette VHS Release!
English Dubbed and Subtitled
Immortals (V.1) - August 2000
The Demon Seal (V.2) - October 2000
Bilingual DVD Box Set - December 2000

SUGGESTED 16 UP

© 1995 Yuzo Takada/Kodansha/Plex/Star Child

Available at these and other fine stores

TOWER RECORDS

MEGASTORE

SUNCOAST MOTION PICTURE COMPANY WE KNOW MOVIES

Pioneer

For More Information
Call 1.800.421.1621
Or See Our Website At:
www.pioneeranimation.com

3x3 EYES

Freakylinks *combines television with the Internet to delve into the paranormal.*

Each episode of Night Visions *will provide a new story ranging from Horror to the supernatural.*

(executive producers/writers Chris Carter, Frank Spotnitz, Vince Gilligan, and John Shiban, plus executive producer/director Rob Bowman), Byers, Langly, and Frohike are ready to strike out on their own.

Initially they're billed as a misguided Mission Impossible team, embarking on a series of comic and dramatic adventures that showcase their genius and ineptitude. While it looks like they'll focus on conspiracy investigation, who knows what fantastic elements they may encounter? Their greatest competitor is a brilliant and beautiful woman, played by Zuleikha Robinson.

Dark Angel is another new Fox series that's more Sci-Fi than Fantasy, but worth a look because it's the first TV project helmed by James Cameron (*Terminator, T2, The Abyss,* and *Titanic*). Jessica Alba stars as Max, a genetically engineered human prototype who escapes her military handlers only to be hunted down by them through an underground world in the Pacific Northwest.

PAX TV offers up a paranormal drama called *Mysterious Ways*, starring Adrian Pasdar (*Carlito's Way* and TV's *Profit*) and Rae Dawn Chong (*Quest for Fire*). Pasdar plays Declan Dunn, the survivor of a skiing accident—he was buried under an avalanche and given up for dead. The experience has caused Dunn to become fascinated with the inexplicable, always wondering if the answer lies in coincidence or if it's a matter of predestination. As a professor of anthropology at a leading university, Dunn has the means and opportunity to investigate odd occurrences, reluctantly aided by skeptical psychiatrist Peggy Fowler (played by Chong).

NBC launches lighter fare in the form of *Cursed*, a new, quirky comedy starring Steven Weber (*Wings*) as Jack Nagle, a successful Chicago ad exec whose future becomes star-crossed after he jilts a blind date—and she retaliates by putting a hex on him.

One of the most interesting syndicated series returning for its sophomore season is *Beastmaster*, based loosely on the novel by Andre Norton.

"Although the character Beastmaster is the focal point of our series," says executive producer Jeffrey Hayes, "the series is much different than the novel. It stands on its own in that way."

Beastmaster was the No. 1 new syndicated series in the United States last season and is cleared in 95 percent of the country.

Daniel Goddard stars as Dar, the Beastmaster, who is among the last of an enlightened race that understood the forces of nature. Unfortunately, most of that race was destroyed by the warlike Terrons, ruled by King Zad. The other survivor of Dar's race is his long-lost love Kyra, who is kidnapped and enslaved by the Terron warriors.

Season 1 of Beastmaster established its world of magic and sorcery, as well as a rich cast of characters with well-thought-out motivations. It's an intelligent and complex series.

Dar has the ability to communicate telepathically with animals, so some of Goddard's costars include a tiger, ferrets, and an eagle. "Dar's franchise is the natural world," Hayes notes. "And the Demon Curupira gave him his powers to protect that natural world. So obviously there is a healthy respect for animals and the environment. And that's kind of a theme that we attempt to portray in the series, because it's an important theme in reality as well as in our Fantasy. For instance, when we started the series—and we're working with these fantastic tigers—none of us had any idea that the tigers are a very endangered species."

Dar's quest in Season 1 was to try to free Kyra from the Terrons and reunite with her. Although he succeeded in the final episode of the season, Kyra sacrificed her life to save Dar's.

Hayes describes how Season 1 was brought to an end, and what we can expect in Season 2 of *Beastmaster*. "[In Season 1, Dar] was going to be searching for her and be frustrated in his search at every turn. But then toward the end of the season as we started to look ahead into the second year, we all felt that we probably mined that arc as much as we could. And we also felt that we were probably tying our lead down to an unrequited love that didn't allow him to have other relationships. So we felt in the 2nd season that we wanted to broaden his ability to fall in love with other women or at least have relationships with other women."

Hayes describes what else is new for the 2nd season. "King Zad is going to run into a group of warriors from the North who have managed to create metal, and therefore their weapons are stronger. So Zad is going to get defeated and run for the hills. The Nords, as they're called, are headed by a young king named Vodin who is a Caligula-esque kind of character, who is a brilliant military strategist, and wants the Beastmaster for his own so he can use his powers to create armies

James Cameron takes over the small screen with this new series, Dark Angel.

TOP: Scully could be carrying Mulder's baby, but will he be around to see the birth?
ABOVE: The Lone Gunmen *return in their own series to uncover new conspiracies.*

animals [that] would make great infiltraters and scouts. He's going to become, in a sense, our new bad guy. And Zad, although he's not going to be leaving the series, will have a different set of problems to solve in order to get back his evil rule."

The Lost World is a syndicated action/adventure series that's also returning for a 2nd season. Based on the novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the show tells the story of a mismatched group of explorers who go on an expedition into the uncharted Amazon around the year 1900. In the premiere episode, the expedition uses its hot-air balloon to escape a tribal attack, but the balloon crashes on the plateau of The Lost World. It's a land where dinosaurs still exist, as well as ancient civilizations. The expedition meets up with Veronica, a young woman whose missing parents were also explorers, but who has grown up alone in The Lost World and serves as their guide. Each week, they all must not only try to find their way out but fight for their survival along the way.

Hayes also serves as executive producer, alongside John Landis, for *The Lost World*. "In the 1st season, to be honest with you, I just wanted to accomplish the dinosaurs in a halfway decent way," Hayes says. "Just from a technical standpoint, it's one thing to do *Jurassic Park* and have three years to make that, and then it's another thing to do it every week. We kind of were on a learning curve initially, and I think that we've managed to get to a point for the 2nd season where our dinosaurs—on a computer-generated basis and on a puppetry basis—are going to be comparable to some of the best work out there.

"But *The Lost World* in its own way has its own mythology attached to it, because it's a very broad canvas. Once you're in The Lost World, we've determined that we can do anything. We can time travel, we can discover aliens who visited the planet millennia ago, we have dinosaurs, we can have magic, we can have all sorts of different tribes and civilizations. Just like *Beastmaster*, both are Fantasy oriented, but they deal in two completely different worlds."

Season 1 of *The Lost World* ended with some of the adventurers plunging into a chasm into oblivion. "It's a cliffhanger," Hayes says. "We leave it with three of our characters falling into a chasm, and we don't know who's going to survive.

"As opposed to *Beastmaster*, we don't deal in extended arcs. We have very closed-off episodes. We have a lot of different stories going on in Season 2. We've expanded into some pretty interesting, more mythological, mystical kind of things. That gives you more room to move in your storytelling. We'll have more dinosaurs than we had last year, because we've managed now, with the computer software the way it is today, to be able to create dinosaurs more realistically and quicker than we were at the beginning of last year. There'll be wilder civilizations."

Xena returns for a 6th season, once again ranking as the top original drama made for syndicated television. The new season picks up where Season 5 left off—Xena and Gabrielle (played by Lucy Lawless and Renee O'Connor), awake after having been asleep for the past 25 years, will now learn what happened to their families during their absence. And now that Xena has wiped out most of the gods of Olympus, new creatures

Arms of Valor, Ltd.

Purveyors of Fine Weaponry

Photo Courtesy of Guilde de Treville

We offer a wide selection of decorative, battle-ready and fantasy swords, armor and shields. Custom shields and chain mail available. Gift certificates are also available in any amount.

"Blade—Sword of the Daywalker" is now available!

Visit us on-line at:
www.armsofvalor.com

Toll free:
1-888-47-SWORD

For a catalog, send $5.00 to:
9309 E. Marion Road
Wichita, KS 67210-2445

ofwill be arising to fill that void.

The new season will also reveal the destiny of Xena's daughter, Eve (played by Adrienne Wilkinson), as well as the fate of Ares, the god of war. Joxer's son, Virgil (played by William Gregory Lee), also returns for several episodes.

The season promises two elaborate episodes that take place in northern Africa and several episodes with spectacular special effects. Norse mythology lies at the heart of three of these episodes, which feature Valkyries, flying horses, and the Norse god Odin. The lowdown is that issues from Season 5 will be resolved quickly, and Season 6 will swiftly kick up to a pace of exciting stories and effects.

Although the syndicated series *Hercules* won't be returning, you can catch repeats on the SCI FI Channel.

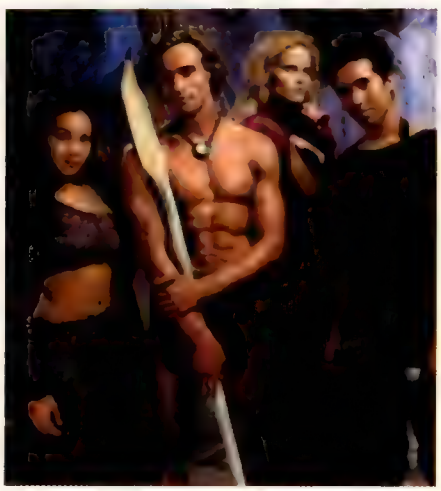
If you haven't already tuned in to *Invisible Man* on the SCI FI Channel, this fall is your opportunity to get up to speed. The first 12 episodes of this new series, based on the H.G. Wells novel, began airing in June. The series will repeat during the fall, with new episodes slated to air in January.

Don't miss out on this edgy and comic series by assuming that the idea is too hackneyed and old to work. It's been updated with an unusual character in the lead.

Breck Eisner, who directed the two hour pilot, was hesitant until he read the script. "It's a great character," Eisner says about *Invisible Man*. "It's just really the linchpin."

"There's something sort of heavy about this show," says Vincent Ventresca (*Romy and Michele's High School Reunion* and TV's *Boston Common* and *Friends*), who stars as Darien Fawkes, the Invisible Man himself. "It's sort of quirky and sort of funny, and it's definitely subversive, but at its core it's thought provoking."

So what happened? How do you take an idea that's on death's door and breathe new life into it?



TOP: Inhabitants of The Lost World *must battle for their survival. ABOVE: The* Beastmaster *will encounter a new foe.*

The answer begins with Matt Greenberg (*Mimic, Halloween: H20,* and *Prophecy II*), the creator and executive producer of *Invisible Man.* In addition to developing screenplays for 20th Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, and Miramax, Greenberg has a degree in medieval studies from Yale. He's also a playwright whose stage plays have been produced in London, New York, and several American regional theaters. Greenberg not only designed the fictional science and technology to explain how invisibility might work, but he developed a new story and characters that result in a series that's a mix of action/adventure, comedy, and dark drama.

"It's a little Coen Brothers—it's where the reality is just slightly higher than our own," Ventresca says of the series. "This is the most creatively ambitious show I've ever been on."

The power of *Invisible Man* may be in the fact that Darien is something of an Everyman. He isn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination—but none of us is. He's a small-time thief who can't abandon a stranger in need of help, even though that decision puts him at risk. Despite Darien's weaknesses, he places the lives of people first. He'd rather risk getting caught by the police and going to prison than letting a stranger die.

Because Darien has chosen to spend his life walking on the dark side, probably more than most of us, the power of invisibility is an especially great temptation to him.

"I like that he's dark," Eisner says. "He's a character who's set up as a criminal. But what's interesting is that as you get to know him, you realize he's really a great human being. He's a really smart and ethical man who's been brought up in a world where he hasn't necessarily traveled the right path. And so he's constantly forced to decide to do what's right or what his instincts tell him to do. Does he follow the path he's always lived or is he going to break through it and find his true self?"

As we approach Season 8 of *The X-Files,* we face a slew of questions. Will Scully get a new partner? Will it be someone we already know or a completely new face? Will Scully take on Mulder's role as the one who wants to believe? When will we see Mulder again and under what circumstances? At press time, those involved with *The X-Files* were as mum as F.B.I. agents.

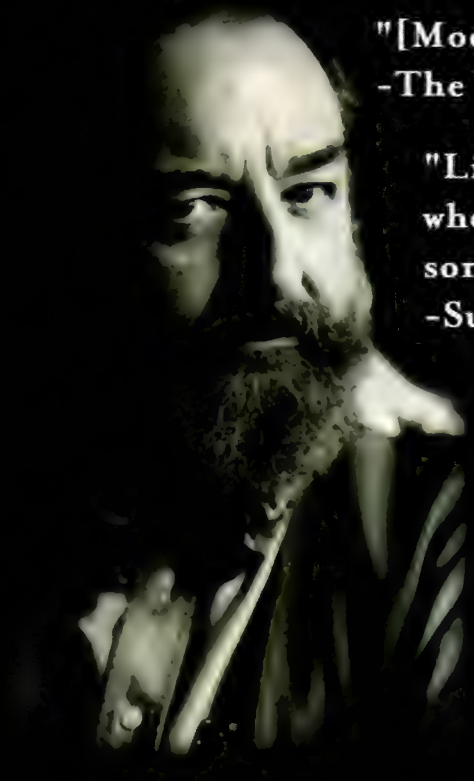
The WB offers the largest number of returning Fantasy series, including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel, Charmed,* and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch,* as it moves to the WB from ABC.

But keep your eyes open for mid-season replacement series, which could debut any time between January and March 2001.

Fox has *Ultraviolet,* based on a British miniseries by the same name, lined up as a mid-season replacement. This one-hour drama follows New York City police lieutenant John Cahill as he stumbles onto an underground society of vampires waging war against the government agency whose mission is to destroy them. Cahill discovers that vampires exist when he goes looking for his best friend and partner, who has suddenly vanished. He discovers that his friend not only has been seduced into fighting for the vampires' survival—he may have become of them.

News From the Edge is a mid-season NBC drama whose premise is that all of the outrageous supermarket tabloid headlines are actually true—that there really are aliens and monsters living in our midst. Tucker Burns (played by Chad Willett of *Jack & Jill*) is a young, unemployed journalist. Desperate for work, he takes a job at the "World Chronicle" tabloid in New York. Once there, he learns that all of the ridiculous stories that they print are true—and they've got the proof. In fact, the newspaper's top researcher is Sal the Pig-Boy, a half-man half-pig who works in the secret underground archives.

There are also two supernatural thriller mid-season replacement shows. UPN has *All Souls* on tap, which takes place in a haunted hospital. The WB is preparing *Dead Last,* a drama about a rock band that discovers an amulet, enabling them to see spirits. ❧



"[Moorcock] is a major novelist of enormous ambition."
-The Washington Post

"Like Tolkien... Moorcock has the ability to create a wholly imaginative world landscaped with vivid and sometimes frightening reality."
-Sunday Times

"If you are at all interested in fantastic fiction, you must read Michael Moorcock."
-Tad Willliams

Complete the saga

Whether revisiting old friends or discovering the magic of Moorcock's fiction for the first time, all fifteen volumes of the Eternal Champion series are now available from White Wolf Publishing. In tradeback and limited hardcover editions.

MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S

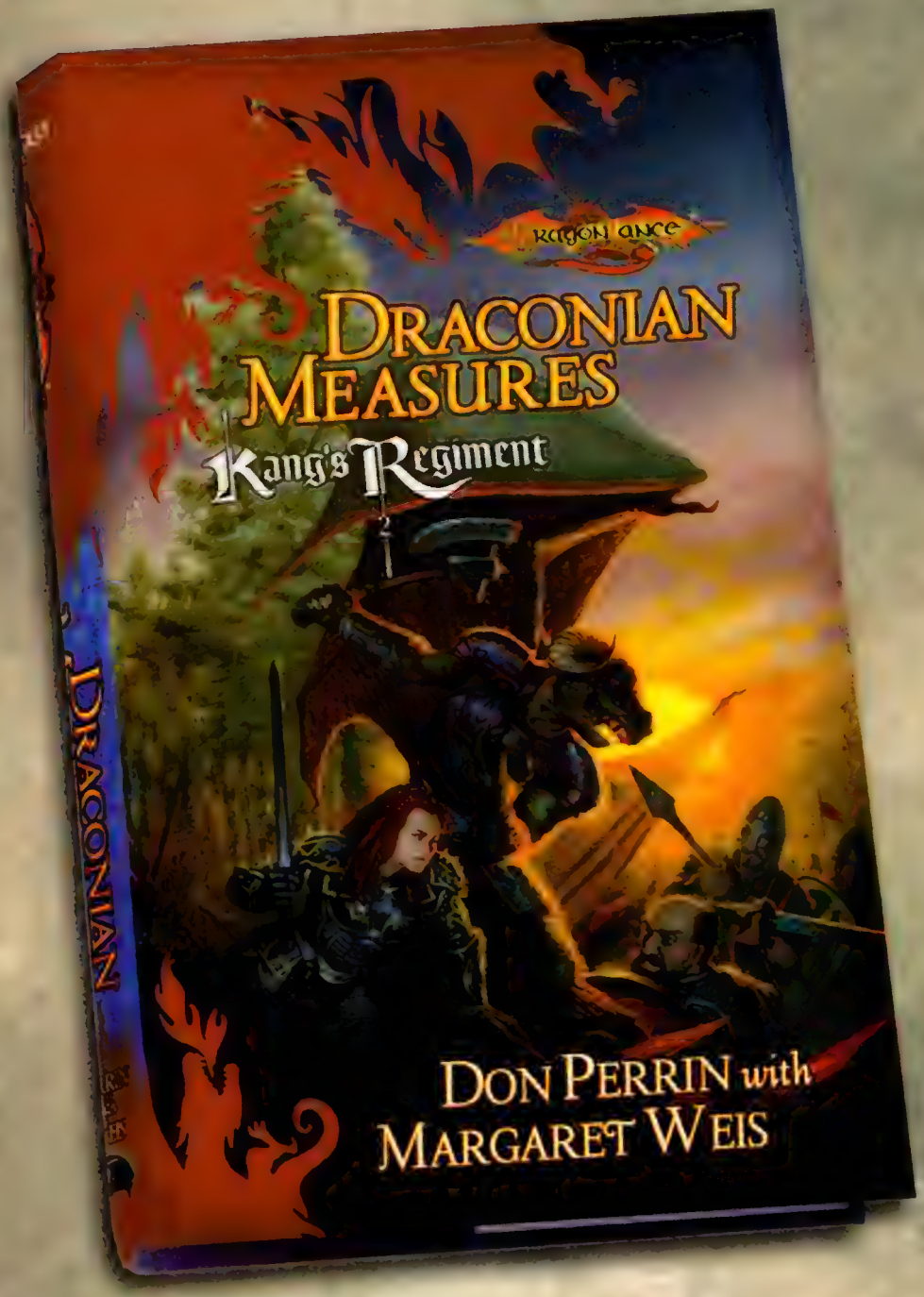
THE ETERNAL CHAMPION SERIES

WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING

BOREALIS LEGENDS

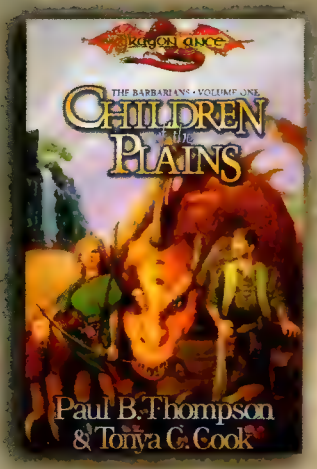
White Wolf is a registered trademark of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. Borealis Legends is a trademark of White Wolf Publishing, Inc. The Eternal Champion is trademark to Michael Moorcock. All rights reserved.

Imagine your most daunting task.
A cake walk compared to this.

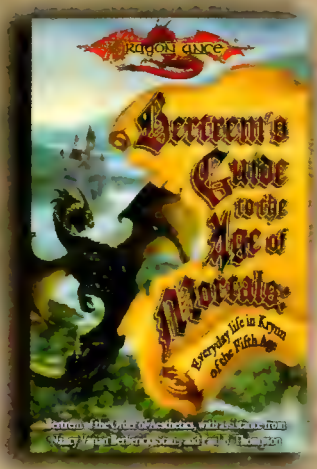


Draconian Measures
ISBN 0-7869-1678-8

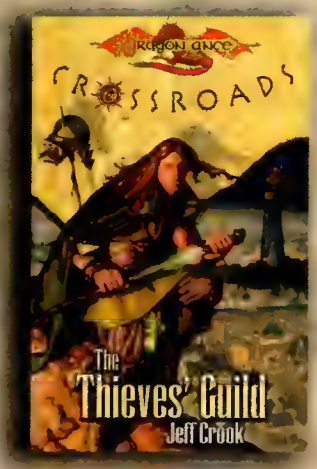
Look for these novels at better book and hobby stores everywhere.



Children of the Plains
The Barbarians, Volume I
0-7869-1391-6



Bertrem's Guide to the Age of Mortals: Everyday Life in Krynn of the Fifth Age
0-7869-1437-8



The Thieves' Guild
Crossroads Series
0-7869-1681-8

Adventure so vivid, we suggest you keep a sword nearby.

DRAGONLANCE

Wizards of the Coast

All trademarks are property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ©2000 Wizards

www.wizards.com/books

BY HEINZ INSU FENKL

Some physicians are critical of the symbol associated with wealth, commerce, and the patron god of thieves.

HERE WE SEE HIS FULL POWER OF TRANSCENDENCE, WHEREBY THE LOWER TRANSCENdence from underworld snake-consciousness, passing through the medium of earthly reality, finally attains transcendence to superhuman or transpersonal reality in its winged flight."—Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man" in Carl Jung's *Man and his Symbols*. **Hermes and Aesculapius:** If you've ever been to a hospital or flipped through a phone book looking up a physician, you've seen the image: two serpents criss-crossed around a staff topped by a round knob and flanked by wings. This is known as the caduceus, and it has been the symbol of the American medical profession for nearly a hundred years—a decidedly odd symbol for doctors, until you begin to investigate its underlying meanings.

According to Walter Friedlander, in *The Golden Wand of Medicine: A History of the Caduceus Symbol in Medicine*, this connection can be traced back to 1902, when the U.S. Army adopted the caduceus as the insignia of its Medical Corps, which had previously used the cross. Earlier, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the caduceus had been used by printers because it was the staff of Hermes (Mercury) the messenger god, and hence the divine deliverer of information. In the 19th century, a medical publisher used the symbol prominently on its texts, and thereby began the association of the caduceus with medicine, an association made firm by the prevalence of the image in the American Medical Corps during World War I. A symbol first representative of wisdom, eloquence, and communication, thus became the common logo for those in the health profession.

Citing the history of the caduceus, some physicians are critical of the symbol, because Hermes also happens to be the god that leads the dead to the underworld and is not only associated with wealth and commerce, but happens to be the patron of thieves (he is a classic trickster figure in Greek myths). It only makes sense that doctors wouldn't want to be associated with trickery, death, and the accumulation of wealth! Medical purists suggest we should go back to the staff of Aesculapius, which is depicted as a single serpent coiled around a cypress branch.

The story of Aesculapius and his association with Hermes begins to make the story of the related symbols quite interesting. According to Greek myth, the god Apollo, in a fit of jealousy, killed his unfaithful mortal lover, a woman named Coronis (the Greek root of her name, *korone*, refers to a seabird, or a crow). When Apollo discovered that she was pregnant with his son, he had Hermes deliver the child while her body lay on the funeral pyre. The child was none other than Aesculapius.

Aesculapius was trained by the wise centaur, Chiron, to become a healer (since his father, Apollo, was the god

Once associated with trickery and death, the caduceus (lower left of painting) has recently been linked with the medical community.

Fantasy's most anticipated voyage is about to begin!

THE VOYAGE OF THE JERLE SHANNARA

ILSE WITCH

The eagerly awaited new Shannara novel
by *New York Times* bestselling author

TERRY BROOKS

Find out more at:

www.shannara.com

A Del Rey Hardcover
ON SALE SEPTEMBER 5, 2000

DEL REY
The Ballantine Publishing Group

Chivalry Sports™

Renaissance™
Catalog Magazine
The catalog of Medieval, Renaissance, and Fantasy Recreation

KNIGHTGEAR™ ARMOR, SWORDS,
PERIOD CLOTHING,
COSTUME PATTERNS, GIFTS,
BOOKS ABOUT THE RENAISSACNE,
GAMES, VIDEOS, MUSIC,
PEWTER, JEWELRY,
INTERVIEWS, AND ARTICLES,
FIND THIS AND MUCH MORE IN OUR
CATALOG AND ON OUR
NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE AT
RENSTORE.COM.

Order your free catalog today!
1-800-730-KING (5464) RENSTORE.COM
8677 E. Golf Links Rd. Tucson, AZ 85730

u•n•d•e•r•b•e•l•l•y
WOMEN
MEN
PLUS SIZE
JEWELRY
ACCESSORIES
www.underbelly.net

of health), and over time, he became the god of medicine with his own cult and temples. Hippocrates, regarded as the father of Western medicine, was a 20th generation member of the cult of Aesculapius.

There are various explanations for why Aesculapius's symbol is the serpent coiled around a staff. The figurative interpretations consider the symbology (the snake's association with rebirth, the cypress branch as representing strength); and the utilitarian approach suggests that the snake was a poisonous one tied to the staff, its venom used for its medical properties. But the fact that Hermes was Aesculapius's deliverer does not quite explain how the messenger god ended up with the symbol for medicine or why the serpents were doubled (though the wings might be explained as a displacement of Hermes/Mercury's winged ankles).

In light of my last column on serpent symbols, what I've presented here might seem an adequate (though incomplete) explanation of the caduceus. But as it is with most symbols from antiquity—regardless of how accurately they have retained their original meanings—the possible truth is far more complex, and to explore it is to go into that interstitial space where folklore, religion, myth, and even science begin to lose their boundaries.

The Tree and the Winged Serpent

From a purely folkloric angle, it is impossible to ignore an odd fact that one finds in nearly every culture and throughout history: not only are staffs and serpents generally associated, but the juxtaposition or combination of the serpent and the bird symbols is almost always profoundly meaningful. That meaning, except in rare exceptions (which actually seem to prove the rule) is always positive, associated with healing, wisdom, and transcendence. The symbol of serpent and bird is typically reserved for powerful mythic figures, humans of unusual distinction (like shamans and mystics), or for royalty, who are often considered of divine origin.

First, consider some of the connections between the serpent and the staff or rod—those that go beyond the predictable explanation that a rod looks like a rigid serpent. In the Old Testament, during the exodus from Egypt (Numbers 21), Moses is told by God to construct a fiery serpent of brass and to display it on a pole so that those who had been bitten by poisonous snakes would be healed by gazing upon it. In the Gospel of John (John 3:14), we find this particular serpent image recalled in relation to Christ: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." This allusion not only makes the serpent potentially divine like Christ, but it associates Christ with the serpent (something quite common in Gnostic texts, as I discussed in "The Binary Serpent"). Earlier, in Sumerian and Akkadian representations of the *axis mundi* (the axis on which the world spins), one finds a pair of serpents criss-

crossed over the rod. In Teutonic myth, Odin's universe is supported by Yggdrasil, "The World Ash." At the top of this cosmic tree is an eagle, and in its roots is the great cosmic serpent, Nidhogg, who will devour the bones of humanity after the great fall. In Buddhist folklore, the Buddha once meditated under the tree of the serpent king. When a rainstorm threatened to get the Buddha wet, a giant cobra wrapped himself around the Buddha's body seven times and opened his great hood over the Buddha's head to keep him dry.

The caduceus, held by Hermes, represents strength, rebirth, and wisdom.

The bird seems already integral to the serpent and rod equation, and it becomes more prominent in other symbology, eventually becoming combined with the serpent. The origin of Kungfu (which is not only martial, but therapeutic and healing), refers to a folktale about a Buddhist monk (or, in some versions, a nun) who observed a crane fighting a snake and designed exercises to emulate their motions. In Sumerian and Babylonian iconography, the gods are often represented by winged disks and figures that are half human and half snake. Egyptian creation myths refer to a serpent and a primordial egg, which contained a bird of light. The pharaohs of unified Egypt wore the trademark double crown of Horus and Set, represented by the vulture and the cobra. The serpent coiled on the foreheads of the pharaohs represented divine fire, which originated at the base of the spine and ascended it just as the serpent had crawled up the Tree of Life. In Sanskrit, the coiled serpent is used to represent Kundalini, the energy that rises from the sacrum—the bone at the base of the spine—and results in enlightenment when it properly reaches the crown of the head through the practice of Kundalini yoga, which channels the energy along the six chakras, or energy centers, that correspond to the number of intersections of the serpent on the caduceus. Literally, Kundalini means "The Serpent Power."

Among Egyptian hieroglyphs one finds a prominent winged serpent, which some say is a precursor of the most famous of winged serpents, the Mesoamerican feathered serpent, Quetzalcoatl, known also as Kulkulcan. Like the Egyptian pharaoh, Akhanaten, Quetzalcoatl declared that there was only one god, and he did away with earlier forms of sacrifice; he was a healer and a scientist, and he could take on human form. (One of history's great ironies is how the Conquistadors took advantage of the story of Quetzalcoatl's return to destroy a civilization.)

From a feathered serpent, it is easy to make the next association to a serpent that flies, namely the figure of the dragon (the Greek *drakon*, which means "serpent"). Since it is a topic for its own future column, I will provide just a few examples here: In the lore of the British Isles, the most prominent dragon

ANCIENT
MEDIEVAL
GREEK & ROMAN
RENAISSANCE
NAPOLEONIC
ENGLISH CIVIL WAR
FANTASY & MORE!!!

IMPORTED OR CUSTOM
books, swords, daggers, polearms,
armour, decorator items

BLACKSWORD
ARMOURY, INC.
Check out our website or catalogs-$5.00
22516 E CR1474, Dept F
Hawthorne, FL 32640
352-475-5380

www.blacksword.com

is, of course, the mythic king Arthur Pendragon. In Chinese cosmology, there are four Ao, or Dragon Kings (Qin, Kuang, Jun, and Xun), each with his own elemental domain. In Korean legend, virtuous serpents eventually become dragons when rising into heaven, ascending a rainbow. The rainbow itself is a profound symbol, though here we can consider its quality of being like the colored ribbons associated with the maypole dance or the colored ribbons on the original caduceus (which also find expression in the red, white, and blue lines on the traditional barber's pole). The rainbow is also associated with flight and presents a winglike quality when it is bisected. In the tradition of Voodoo, one finds prominent connections between rainbow and serpent; among the Australian Aborigines, the rainbow serpent (with a host of different names, depending on language and region), is the most important figure in the Dreamtime. According to some variants of the Dreamtime myths, it is the primary creator of features that linger in the mundane world.

When the symbol of the caduceus is stylized and simplified, it creates another set of linked associations. For decades, anthropologists have tried to decipher the meaning of the symbol found among the ruins of Minoan Crete (one of the primary sources of Greek civilization). This symbol, called the labrys, is often called a double-headed axe because it resembles one. Feminists have reinterpreted it, given the Minoan culture, to represent the wings of a butterfly spread at the top of a rod (which might represent a caterpillar); it is read now as a symbol of transformation and transcendence, which makes it parallel to the caduceus; but scholars have not yet realized that it is, in fact, a simplified caduceus. Less sophisticated renditions of the labrys scratched onto stones and walls look like a sideways hourglass on top of a line. Likewise, in a more modern context, we tend to take the familiar pharmacists' logo to be an overlapping R and X when, in fact, it is a skewed rendition of the Greek letters Chi (X) and Ro (P), which are actually a representation of Christ (Chi and Ro being the first two letters in his name). The pharmacist's ChiRo is an invocation of Christ's healing power, just as the ChiRo in Chiropracty (in case you've wondered) is a reference to Christ. The Chi and Ro used in Christian iconography look remarkably similar to the simplified labrys, though the connection may seem forced until one examines the symbology of Christ on the cross.

When the serpent and the bird are forcefully separated, they tend to take on opposite and antagonistic meanings. A good example of this phenomenon is what happens in Genesis, when the serpent is demonized as Satan and the Tree of Life is taboo. This contrasts with the story of the flood in which the white bird (the dove) bringing back the olive branch is associated with salvation as it finds the place for Noah to land (and note the use of the rainbow symbol as a promise from God never again to flood the earth). In the New Testament, the dove represents the Holy Spirit which, in Catholic symbology, is part of the Trinity. Since I've already pointed out how Christ has been equated with the serpent in my earlier column, suffice it to say that if God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are one and the same according to the doctrine of the Trinity, then the Catholic crucifix is implicitly a caduceus as well: the cross is the staff, and Christ is simultaneously serpent and bird. And the knob at the top of the caduceus? On the crucifix, that is implied by the presence of God, though it is ironically inhibited by the crown of thorns.

The Science of the Literal

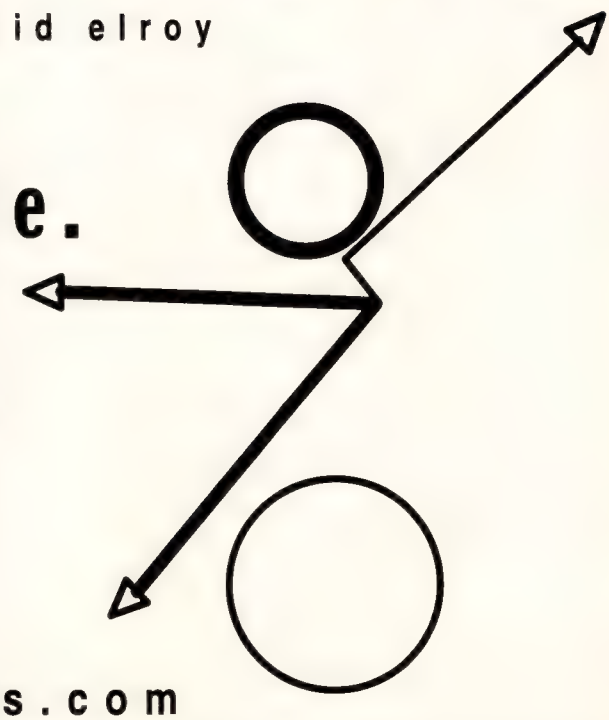
As is characteristic of traditional scholars in the social sciences and the arts, the general tendency over the years has been to read symbolic meanings a bit too figuratively. But recent work has begun to take a more interesting direction.

Those who study shamanism find the symbology of the caduceus very familiar because it represents the connectedness of the three worlds: the underworld, the middle world, and the upper world. The serpent represents the netherworld and its connection to water; the staff represents the cosmic tree, which has its roots under the earth and its branches in the sky; the wings represent

BOUNCING WORLDS

the surreal novel by david elroy

Love. Adventure.
Joy. Mystery.
Danger. Magic.



read the excerpts at
www.caterpillarpress.com
or write PO Box 11723, Berkeley, CA 94712

the spirit and its connection to the divine upper world. Anthropologists like Michael Harner (in *The Way of the Shaman*) and the McKenna brothers (in *The Invisible Landscape*) have suggested that this tripart symbology corresponds to the human mind's tripart consciousness. In biological terms, the caduceus happens to suggest an evolutionary scheme, since the reptile "becomes" a bird as it ascends the staff. This would parallel the phylogenetic hierarchy, in which reptiles evolve into birds which, in turn, evolve into mammals. At the top of the mammalian hierarchy is the human, whose next step is to become more conscious or (at least according to religion) to evolve into a spiritual being. (The human limbic system, which is a vestige of our evolutionary development, is commonly called the "reptile brain.")

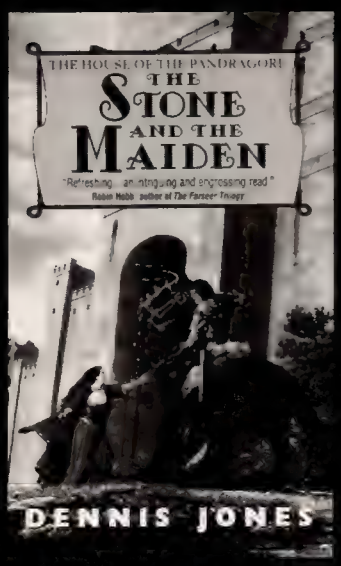
The caduceus, taken as more literal representation, becomes its own illustration or map. For this interpretation, one only has to read the elements of the caduceus as corresponding to elements of the human body. For example: the two serpents represent the pineal gland and the pituitary gland (which both look snakelike when uncoiled); the staff represents the spinal column; the knob represents the medulla or the cranial orb; and the wings represents the two hemispheres of the brain (the wrinkled cross-section of the brain has the shape and texture of stylized wings); the number of intersections of the snakes corresponds to the endocrine glands or the chakras.

What does this correspondence mean? My own tendency is to read the symbols as a suggestion that all humans have the potential for healing, wisdom, and transcendence incorporated in their own being. The caduceus may have been an instructive device whose rules of usage have been transformed into religious ritual over the ages.

Another approach—one that can yield alarming results—is to apply a materialistic reading more rigorously. From that perspective, it is clear that the caduceus might initially have referred to an actual tool used to induce healing and transformation. Over the years, a small number of scholars have taken the caduceus as a diagram for a functional tool. During my research, I ran across one of the most recent functional interpretations by a scientist named Joshua Gulick, who actually constructed a caduceus. He says, "It is not just a symbol. It is an archaic blueprint for an infinitely resonant device to create and project fourth dimensional waves.... Those of you who have studied occult science likely know that serpents often represented electricity, while birds represented magnetism. The serpents in the caduceus symbol represent electrified wires with current flowing towards the heads.

"With these 4th dimensional waves, it might be possible to affect 3 dimensional space.... It might also be extremely easy to

Continued on page 93


THE HOUSE OF THE PANDRAGORI
THE STONE AND THE MAIDEN
"Refreshing ... an intriguing and engrossing read"
Robin Hobb author of The Farseer Trilogy
DENNIS JONES

The First Chapter in a Spectacular New Fantasy Epic of War, Magic, and Miracles

Young Mandine Dascaris is next in line to occupy the throne. But a bloodthirsty barbarian horde is cutting a scarlet swath across the lands, and only a sacred treasure has the potent sorcery required to defeat the foul nemesis...even though possessing it may cost Mandine her soul.

"Well put together and consistently entertaining." – Locus

"I picked it up after dinner and read through the end at 12:15 a.m. My compliments to Dennis Jones."
– New York Times bestselling author Anne McCaffrey

Eos
An Imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*
www.harpercollins.com

TEALIGHT CANDLE HOLDERS - HANDCRAFTED ORIGINAL DESIGNS
SEND CHECK/MONEY ORDER IN US FUNDS TO:
MASS STONIA CREATIONS
234 COMMERCE ST., HAWTHORNE, NY 10532
ADD $4.95 EACH ITEM FOR SHIPPING & HANDLING
NY RESIDENTS ADD SALES TAX - WHOLESALE WELCOME

Luther sat in the darkness of his cell, the sound of thunder pealing like cannon fire beyond the walls of Wartburg Castle. The air stung his nostrils, and more than the sound or the furied brilliance, the odor dredged from memory the night 16 years before, *anno Domini* 1505, when the lightning had seared his flesh; when from the brink of death, he had heard the voice of God. He pressed the remembered pain from his mind, and the vividness of God ebbed with it.

Luther held his hands out before him in the darkness, whether to fend off the lightning's barrage or to posture a defiance of something less tangible, even Luther did not know. Yet in the instants of white light streaking from the shutters, his hands shook uncontrollably.

Terror was simply a part of life because God was Terrible, and in Luther's nostrils fear's reek was as palpable as the lightning's.

Sixteen years. The night he had chosen to defy his father, a stern man of influence, proud of his son about to enter the study of law. When Luther announced that he would enter the Monastery at Erfurt, his father had only turned away, angered beyond speech.

Now Luther cowered in his cell. A cell of mind, invisible bars forged of doubt. He was an outlaw, after all—*Decet Romanum Pontificem*—excommunicated by the Pope himself. Luther's Ninety-five Theses, nailed to the door of Wittenberg castle church, had made his path inexorable. Now, after so many defeats, he longed to hear the voice of God again, reaffirming that path; reaffirming Luther himself.

The hair on Luther's neck and arms prickled. Before the fear could rise from his throat, the flash came, so near, so brilliant, that he feared it would tear away the shutters and thrust down the walls, and in the same instant the knell crashed at his ears. But the shattering echo was not simply thunder. In it called a voice, as clear as the brilliance-outlined shutters. Not the voice of God this time, but the angry bellow of some great creature, its trumpeted scream harrowing Luther's soul until the goose flesh pressed against the sleeves and back of his cassock. Beyond his own will, he came to his feet. The Bible warned of giants, of cockatrices, of dragons, of beasts beyond imagining, and yet this voice surpassed the terrors of them all.

He prayed to Saint Anne, mother of Mary, who had spared him after the lightning's stroke 16 years before. That night he had vowed to become a monk, yes, perhaps in exchange for his life. Tonight, he had nothing left to bargain with.

The door rattled behind him and he spun, finally realizing it was only the sound of a man's fist, beckoning for admittance. Daring make no sound, he lifted the latch and backed away as the door opened. Beyond, bearing only a guttering candle, stood Josef.

Luther and th DRAGO

By Franklin Thatcher
Illustration by Ken Graning

THE WORLD WE SEE IS SHAPED BY THE WORLD WE KNOW. BUT AWE IS A FEELING THAT CROSSES THE GULF OF TIME.

HERE LAY INCARNATE THE TERROR HE HAD FELT THAT NIGHT 16 YEARS BEFORE, ABOVE EVEN THE PAIN OF HIS OWN SEARED FLESH. THE TERROR HE HAD TRIED SO IN VAIN TO EXPLAIN TO HIS FATHER.

"Begging your pardon, Father Luther," the rough servant said, "but there's a man named Groff calling for you."

Luther's mind raced. He did not know the name. What purpose could anyone have in seeking him out on such a night? He shivered, remembered the fearsome bellow beyond his shutter. How could the two not be linked? It was the way of all things.

Luther followed Josef's dark back, the light of the candle flickering along the rough walls before him. In the great hall, before the fireplace, shivered a man of perhaps 50 years, his clothing soaked with rain, his hands worrying together. Upon seeing Luther he fell to his knees, took Luther's hand and kissed it.

Luther drew him up. "What is the matter?"

"A beast, Father." The man's voice trembled, from cold or from fear. "A demon of terrible aspect."

"Where?"

"Our mine, near Straach. We retreated in dread and dare not return. Even the Vicar fled upon seeing it."

"What would you have me do?"

"All in the German lands know your wisdom and courage, Father Luther. You will be able to drive it away."

Luther stared at the floor. Stripped of authority by Rome, what power could he hold over dragon or cockatrice? And even God had fallen silent of late. Yet Luther could not leave the man helpless against the forces of the Invisible World.

Outside, the lightning crackled and roared. Signs were there for those who would see. Perhaps the terrible voice had been a call to come see this wonder, to act in the name of God, to act on invisible faith when even hope was gone.

"I will come."

LUTHER STOOD at the edge of what was no more than a hole in the ground, barely large enough for a man to scrabble down using the knotted rope that vanished over its edge and into the darkness. The talus around the mine was thick with clinging mud that sucked at Luther's inadequate shoes. Men stood clustered around the opening, their torches whipping in the wind, their grim faces illuminated by the flickering light. Groff lowered himself over the edge, a miner's lantern slung to his belt. The rope bit deeply into the mud under his weight. Moments later, he called up from the darkness for Luther. One of the men tied a lantern to Luther's belt, lifted the muddy rope into his hands, and nodded hopefully. Luther stumbled and crawled over the muddy edge, lowering himself into the netherworld. His hands ached around the knots as he descended and the odors of rain and lightning quickly gave way to those of earth and stone. He sniffed the air, expecting at any moment to find brimstone, but smelled only wet earth. Luther's breath came more harshly as he descended, his arms straining under the exertion. With each breath, dirt seemed to fly into his mouth, and for an instant he frantically considered climbing back up. At that moment his feet splashed into water and he gratefully settled into the ankle-deep, black puddle at the bottom of the shaft, his hands frozen into claws which Groff pried away from the rope.

The lanterns illuminated the tiny chamber, just large enough for two men to stoop. Luther looked up to see the gathered faces above, then Groff dropped to his knees and crawled into a hole barely big enough for him. Luther crossed himself, knelt in the water, and crawled after.

In the pale light of his lantern, Luther could only focus on Groff's muddy backside. All around him now was fragile stone that seemed to peel off in layers, and when he let himself think about the closeness of the space, he shook so much that his head knocked against the roof of the tiny passage.

Then Groff stopped.

"What is wrong?" Luther asked.

Groff's hand appeared by his backside and waved Luther to silence. In the darkness Luther listened, wondering if Groff had heard some hint of the demon in the darkness. Finally, Groff crawled on.

Almost immediately the space opened up and Luther climbed to his feet, though he still could not stand upright. In the light of the two lanterns, he saw traces of the vein the miners had been following, coal-black against the gray of the stone. Groff let him pass as he followed the vein until he came to a point where stone lay in shattered splinters, as if it had fallen away from the wall in a great sheet.

There, barely visible in the stone, lay a smooth line. On one side, the stone was identical to that all around them. On the other, it was smooth, fine grained as bone, and a shade darker. Miners' eyes were accustomed to such feeble contrasts, differences that would guide them to a vein of coal, copper, silver, or gold, but Luther's eyes were not trained for such subtleties. He reached out and ran his finger along the finer, darker stone, trying to understand its form. Suddenly the image seemed to leap out on the surface of the rock and he stepped back, clutching his throat to keep from crying out.

Below the line was a pool of lighter stone. He could almost imagine the furrowed brow of some fearsome creature, and beneath it the empty socket of an eye as big as Luther's head. The brow swept down, almost the length of a man, at last curving over the rounded snout and under, to a tooth the size of a dagger. Luther turned away, gasping for breath.

WEREWOLF
THE APOCALYPSE

THAT WHISPER IN THE TREES?
IT'S NOT THE WIND...

THE AGE OF APOCALYPSE HAS ARRIVED.

Available at these and other fine retailers:

- **Blanchards Cutlery & Collectibles**
  3507 S. Maryland Pkwy #E
  Las Vegas, NV 89109
  702.733.8333
  www.blanchardscutlery.com
- **Charlie's Knife Shop**
  1295 Horizon Blvd.
  El Paso, TX 79927
  915.859.3440
- **Charlie's Knife Shop**
  1805 W. Fayette
  Effingham, IL 62401
  217.342.2800
- **C.H. Hutchinson Company**
  P.O. Box 12512
  Santa Ana, CA 92712
  949.559.6150
  www.chhutchinson.com
- **Designs Plus**
  1208 Jackson Crossing
  Jackson, MI 49202
  517.796.9087
  E-mail craig@appl[illegible].compuserve.com
- **The Edge**
  9005 Plaza Dr.
  West Covina, CA 91790
  800.632.4453
  www.knifeking.com
- **Kevin Smith**
  1826 Stanford Ave.
  Redondo Beach, CA 90278
  800.573.8215
  www.swordsales.com
- **Knife Shop**
  Eight Locations in Arizona
  877.790.5800 (toll free)
  www.theknifeshop.com
- **Majestic Novelties**
  2649 East Mulberry #1
  Fort Collins, CO 80524
  888.807.9673
  www.majestic[illegible].com
- **Outland Knife and Cutlery**
  Savannah Mall
  14045 Abercorn St. Box 143
  Savannah, GA 31419
  912.927.8995
- **Plaza Cutlery**
  South Coast Plaza
  Costa Mesa, CA 92626
  714.549.3932
  www.plazacutlery.com
- **Swords and Stuff**
  94 Pleasant Street
  Brunswick, ME 04011
  800.286.4143
  www.swordsnstuff.com

Werewolf: The Apocalypse [illegible] White Wolf Publishing, Inc. exclusively by Whitewolf Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved.

PROCUT

"What did I tell you," Groff whispered.

Luther cut him off with a gesture. Could it be what it appeared? So much of it was still hidden in the stone. He had to see all to be sure.

"Have you extra oil for your lamp?"

"Well, yes. I...."

Groff dumbly offered the flask and Luther took it. "Your mallet?"

Groff pulled this, too, and a chisel, from the pocket of his bulky vest and handed them to Luther.

"Return to your men," Luther said. "And speak nothing of this to anyone."

Groff hesitated, but took it for good advice, and disappeared into the hole leading to the shaft.

Luther girded himself and turned to gaze into the empty eye. His fear was not of the visage itself, but in the fact that he knew it. This was not a thing from myth or legend, nor even from the cryptic passages of Isaiah or John the Revelator. The sheer dread, which even now threatened to buckle his knees, was nothing less than the terror he had felt at the snarling roar beyond the shuttered window of his cell, and at the voice of God 16 years before, a sign that had been so plain to him, and yet so obscure to his father.

After Luther's first mass, he had tried to mend the chasm between himself and his father, had tried to explain the voice, the terror of soul that had led him to the Monastery, to service in God's Invisible World. Across the table, his father had looked him in the eye and said, in a bitter voice barely loud enough to hear, "Better hope that it was not a trick of the devil."

Luther set his lamp on the rough-hewn floor, took the chisel and mallet in hand, and set to work. Blow after blow he struck, chipping away the dross, gradually revealing the face of The Dragon.

Luther's hand drove the mallet, smashing the lighter stone, which fell away like casting from a bronze. With each stroke the bony countenance seemed to strike back at him, and his heart pounded as if to free itself from his ribs. Rivulets of dust fell from the arched rock above, and with each blow, the earth seemed to flex around him, as if the great entombed creature struggled for release. Luther's mind envisioned his father's body, moldering beneath the soil of Eisleben, twisting and turning, whispering to him a message he did not want to hear. "Better hope that it was not a trick of the devil." Even now, these words rang louder than all the night's thunderings, louder than the ringing of chisel against stone.

"Why could you not see something so plain?" he demanded of the stone before him, but the rock's silence stretched into hours.

At times, as he smashed the rock, he found himself laughing, and the next moment weeping as a child. What madness, if they heard, would the men above think had beset him?

Groff's voice called to him, and he fell silent, fearful of being discovered in this exile. After a long silence he resumed, his hands numb from the work.

Would that his father could see this. Even a man as stubborn as he could not look upon this bony face, the empty eye and dagger teeth, and not be shaken to his marrow by the sure knowledge of a great and awful Creator.

But it could never happen. Like the different-colored stones, Luther and his father had gone their separate ways, and the price of Luther's defiance was that they had never spoken again. His father, the lighter stone, now lay still in the earth, while Luther, the darker, persisted.

Luther screamed in fury and anguish, excommunicated by the immortal bonds of death from the one man on Earth he had tried—and failed—to please. He dashed mallet against chisel and the metal implement flew from his shaking hands, glancing a ringing blow from the adjacent stone.

For some time he stood panting in the shadowy chamber.

Retrieving the chisel, he worked as the lamp burned low with the last of the oil. His stomach twisted with hunger, and his tongue, swollen from thirst, clove to his palate. But the great serpentine head drew him on, until at last he fell back against the cold stone opposite, his eyes burning with fatigue and the soot of the lamp, his body shaking from fear and exhaustion.

At last the beast's head lay nearly revealed; the vacant eye, the deep cavity of the nose, the parallel rows of scimitar teeth with their ragged, serrated edges, some dwarfing even the first one he had seen.

Here lay incarnate the terror he had felt that night 16 years before, above even the pain of his own seared flesh. The terror he had tried so in vain to explain to his father, to explain again to himself as he hid in the exile of Wartburg Castle. What man could look upon this monster and not know the terror and majesty of God? Know it beyond any shadow of doubt?

In the instant, Luther knew this fiend was not meant for the eyes of men—not all men, at any rate. Lucifer—The Dragon—here symbolically dead and entombed, reduced to this stony skull, bore a message for Luther alone. Alone, but for one other.

In seeming response, one of the great teeth shuddered, twisted, and fell to the talussed floor. Luther stared as if it had suddenly come alive, but it lay still as the shards around it.

The lamp flickered, the last of the oil. Luther crept forward, lifted the fallen tooth from the stone, and pressed it into the pocket of his muddied robe.

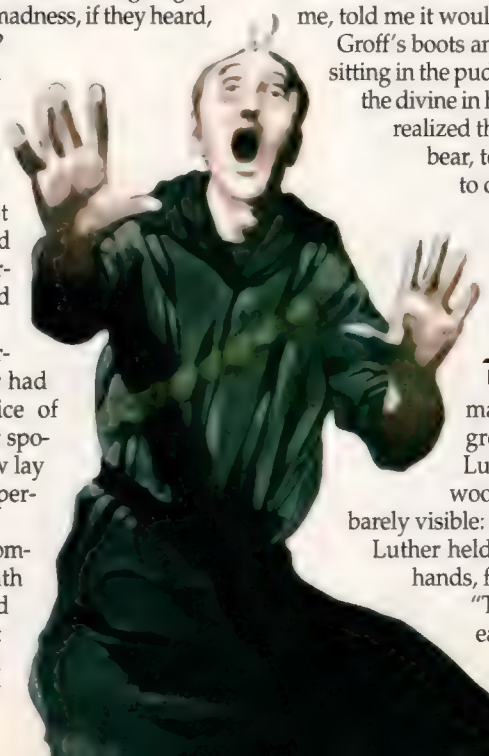
Backing into the narrow tunnel, he searched for a weakness in the rock above, a crack where the stone would easily fail. Pressing the chisel into it, he struck once, twice, three times with the mallet, invoking Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Like Jericho's walls the stone above groaned, trembled, and at last fell. Luther struggled backward toward the shaft, choking as dust filled his nose and throat. A falling stone struck his head, knocking him down, and instantly his arms were pinned to the floor. He fought against the weight, but his exhausted limbs lacked the strength to pull free, and the crumbling stones began to fall on his shoulders and back. One last time he struggled, but barely moved. How could God promise so much, and then let him end like this?

Suddenly, something tugged at his robe, at his legs, and he felt himself dragged backward, the dirt and stone pouring from him.

"I'd almost given you up," Groff's voice said as he dragged Luther from the tunnel. "I was going to wait above, but the stone called to me, told me it would fall."

Groff's boots and clothing were soaked from untold hours of sitting in the puddle at the bottom of the shaft. Each man heard the divine in his own way, and to his own limits. And Luther realized that his father had heard all he had been able to bear, to his own limits as well. But it wasn't too late to change that.

Luther shielded his eyes from the daylight, not so far above as he had thought. Groff tied the rope beneath Luther's arms, called up to his comrades, and Luther was lifted gratefully toward the light.

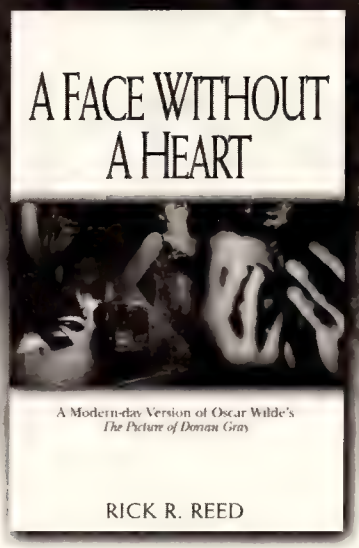


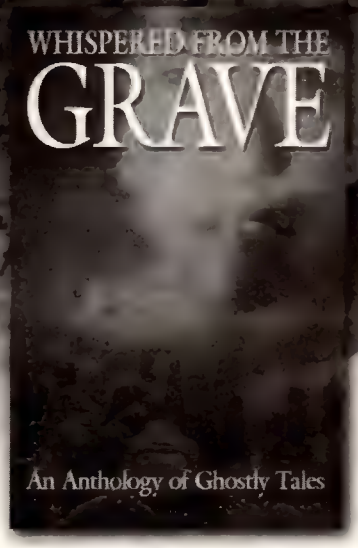
THE SUN SHONE brilliant on the markers of Eisleben churchyard, the weedy ground muddied by yet another night's rain. Luther stood before one particular marker, the wood already failing with time, the carved letters, barely visible: Hans Luder.

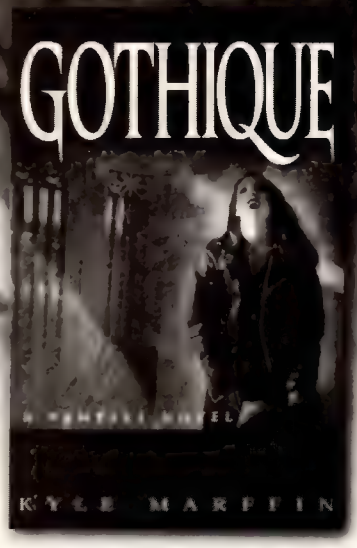
Luther held the dagger tooth out, between his shaking hands, for his father to see.

"This is why I defied you," he said to the silent earth. "Not for fear of my own life. I feared a terror and majesty I saw only when the veil of death so briefly opened my eyes. Now, I

New Voices In Terror



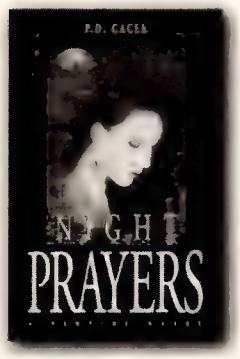




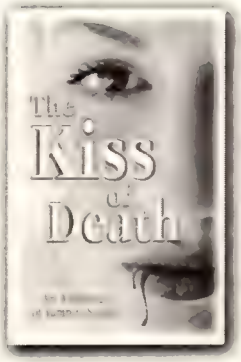
A FACE WITHOUT A HEART
A Modern-Day Version of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
Rick R. Reed
1-891946-08-0
A stunning retake on Wilde's timeless themes of sin, guilt and despair, set amidst a nightmarish world of urban decadence.

WHISPERED FROM THE GRAVE
1-891946-07-2
Fourteen provocative tales of ghosts and hauntings, of desire and revenge from beyond the grave. Featuring David Silva, Barry Hoffman, Nancy Kilpatrick, P.D. Cacek and others.

GOTHIQUE
Kyle Marffin
1-891946-06-4
Welcome to Gothique, nightclub extraordinaire, and take a deliciously dangerous tour of the dark side of the darkwave, where dreams and wishes become horribly real.



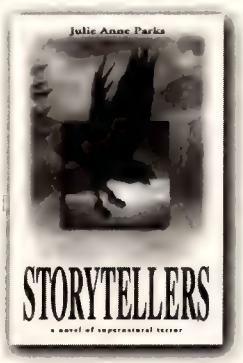
NIGHT PRAYERS
P.D. Cacek
1-891946-01-3
A Stoker Award nominee, a wryly witty urban vampire romp.
"A perfect mix of helter-skelter horror and humor."
Dark Regions/ Horror Magazine



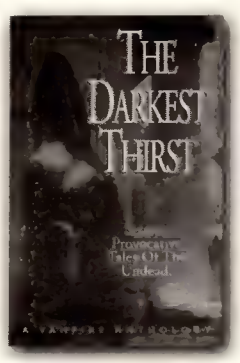
THE KISS OF DEATH
1-891946-05-6
16 writers embrace you with dark tales of the undead
"...Horror, romance or something that will stretch your notion of 'vampire' a little bit."
Vampyre's Crypt

SHADOW OF THE BEAST
Margaret Carter
1-891946-03-X
"Suspenseful, well-crafted adventures in the supernatural."
SF Chronicle
"Tightly written . Recommended."
Merrimack Books

STORYTELLERS
Julie Anne Parks
1-891946-04-8
Nightmarish evils lurk in the haunted North Carolina woods.
"A book to be read with the lights on and the radio playing!"
Bookwatch



THE DARKEST THIRST
1-891946-00-5
16 provocative tales of the undead's darkest thirsts.
"Definitely seek out this book."
Carpe Noctem



CARMILLA: THE RETURN
Kyle Marffin
1 891946-02 1
IHG Award nominee.
"A superbly written novel that honors a timeless classic and will engage the reader's imagination long after it's been finished."
Midwest Book Review

DESIGN IMAGE

Visit us on the web at
www.designimagegroup.com

© 2000 The Design Image Group, Inc.

Available at your favorite retail bookstores and at Amazon.com, Barnesandnoble.com and Chapters.com

The River Woman

By Devon Monk

THE CHOICES LIFE GIVES US AREN'T ALWAYS EASY, BUT WE HAVE TO MAKE THEM NONETHELESS.

JERENE PUSHED THE SHOVEL WITH HER HEEL, SAND coming up wet and heavy as she filled the body-sized bags. The White River was only five feet behind her. It already flooded the orchard on the west bank. Now it spread east, inching ever closer to her house. Jerene dug down again. Rain and her own ragged breath obscured the sand pile at her feet. Still she pushed, dug, lifted, and pushed again, because somewhere in the river, Nathan lay sleeping.

Sleeping in the muddy waters where the storm had torn him away, sleeping like a cold, bloated angel, floating in the rain. Of course it was more than rain, it was snow melt and spring water, and sewers and blood.

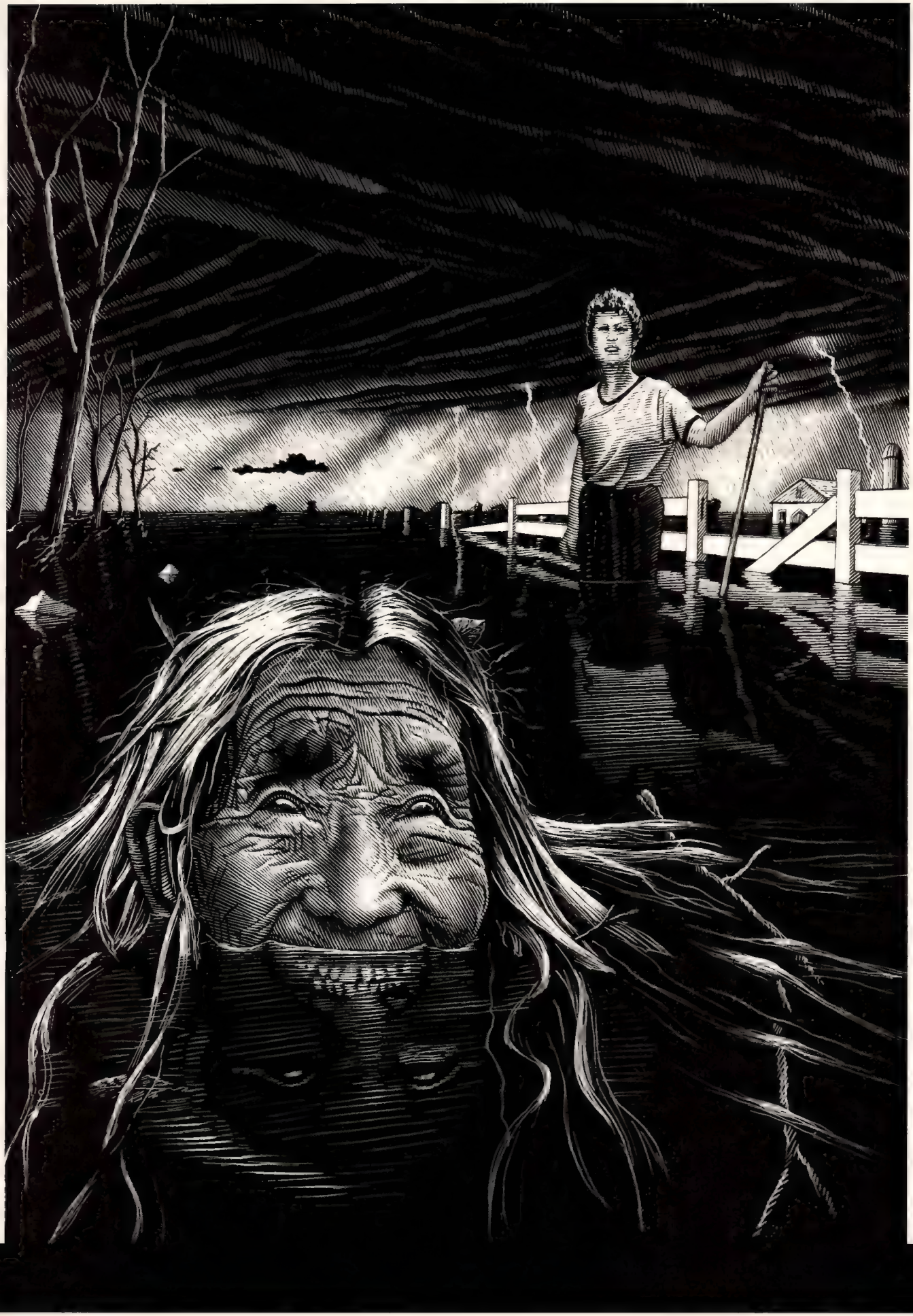
But mostly it was rain.

Two days ago, there had been no warning when the river took her son, no scream, no splash. Only the sudden empty air beside her as they had struggled up the slippery embankment to the main road.

Today there were warnings: on the radio, the television, the newspaper. Warnings on the lips of every person within a hundred miles. Even her ex who never visited before the rain, had found her at the shelter this morning, his red face and whiskey-words telling her the river was coming. Coming to take the rest of her world away. It had covered land that had been dry for hundreds of years.

It had sent gouts of mud down upon half of the Tygh Valley. It had unearthed graves and trees and things that had been buried beneath the soil for centuries.

Illustration by Patrick Arrasmith



HAD THE RIVER SPIRIT COME TO TAKE HER TO NATHAN,

It had taken her son.

She was going to take him back.

She'd left her daughter, Ellie, safe with a neighbor, bundled 60 miles away in the old Cornerstone High School gym turned Red Cross center. Ellie cried when she left, but she promised her she would come back. Promised her Nathan would be OK, even though the valley had been evacuated, even though the death toll had reached a thousand.

She promised she would keep Nathan safe. She intended to do just that.

Jerene set the shovel in the sand and grabbed the half-full bags. She dragged them over to a wall of bags and stacked them on top. It had taken all of yesterday and through the night to make the small wall along her property line. A wall to hold back the White River.

One more day. If she didn't stop for food or sleep, it would only take one more day to build the wall as high as her shoulders. Then her empty house—her children's home—would be safe. She would have a safe place to raise them. A happy place. Everything would be OK again.

She'd find Nathan under the river, curled in the branches of the old walnut trees on the other side of the bank. She would find him, wake him with a kiss, and bring him home.

"Mommy's coming," she whispered. "Mommy will keep you safe." She hadn't kept him safe from his father's drunken rages. She hadn't stopped the neighbor from breaking in the front door, strung-out and screaming. She hadn't patched his favorite toy. She'd meant to sew the bear's eyes back on and mend the hole in its neck, but there had been no time. She always thought there'd be plenty of time.

She had to find Nathan. She had to keep the river away from the house. She had to make everything OK.

She pushed away from the sandbag wall and slogged back to the sand pile. Rain came down in thumb-sized drops, driven by the harsh Oregon wind. Jerene kept her head down, watching her boots through 10 inches of water. She vaguely noted she couldn't feel her feet anymore.

A short distance from the sand pile Jerene glanced up. A small muddy form was huddled by the shovel and bags. Jerene squinted. Nathan?

Her heart lurched.

She ran to the pile and fell, sliding on arms and belly and face.

Strong hands gripped her shoulders, pulled her to a sitting position. Had her husband come back again? Did he think he could convince her Nathan was gone forever? Did he think he could make her stop looking for him, stop loving him? She fought the hands and blinked until she could see her captor.

Barely the size of a six-year-old, a woman stared at her. She sat with both legs tucked beneath her and was naked except for the thick layer of pea-brown mud that covered her slight body. Although she was child-sized, she was unmistakably mature.

For a moment, Jerene wondered if the woman were a statue, a beautiful, miniature goddess. Had the river spirit come to take her to Nathan, or keep her away from him? Jerene shuddered. There were no gods, no spirits, walking the world. Gods no longer cared if mortals cried.

The woman blinked slowly, her eyes the green of sunlit ocean waves. She exhaled, a long, labored rasp.

"Are you OK?" Jerene asked, her voice sudden and loud.

The woman gave another lizard-slow blink. Jerene touched her shoulder and jerked her hand away. She was scorching with fever, yet her eyes were clear and cool.

Jerene struggled to think. Should she call the police? No, the phones had gone out days ago. Cold sank into her bones, the inactivity weighting her tired muscles. She didn't have time to care for the woman. Even now, the river gained ground, inching up to the sandbag wall and soon her house beyond. But she couldn't just leave the woman here.

"Let me take you inside," Jerene said, pushing to her feet. "You can rest upstairs."

The woman stood and pulled short, wide fingers through her muddy hair. Her eyes were set too wide, the orbs too round, stretching the lids at the corners. Her lips were thick and dark around her broad mouth, cheeks flat beneath the high arc of bone. Her throat seemed to swell and contract with each breath, yet her chest did not move.

Jerene rubbed her arm over her eyes, wiping at water and muck. She needed sleep. She needed to keep going. She took a step toward the house and stopped.

"Please," she said, aware of the dark water lapping closer to the wall, "follow me."

The woman tipped her face upward and closed her eyes, unflinching beneath the rain.

"Fine," Jerene said. "But I can't let you die of exposure." She pulled her coat off and clumsily wrapped it around the woman's shoulders.

The woman regarded her for a moment and smiled.

"You're welcome."

Jerene reached down for the shovel. Night was coming. Talking to the woman had robbed her of precious time. She filled two more bags, lifted. Just another step or two, almost there, she thought as she slogged back to the wall, her breath tattered by rain. Without her coat's thin protection, she couldn't stop shaking.

She turned toward the river and saw the tops of the old walnut trees across the way, branch-tips jutting above brown water. Most of the trees had succumbed to the river, exposing rat-tangled roots slick as snakes. Strange things had floated to the surface lately, things that had been buried for years.

Spirits. Gods. Had they surfaced only to take children away?

Jerene closed her eyes against the memory of Nathan's hand slipping from hers. No, no. He was fine. She would keep the river away. She would hold him again, kiss him again.

She walked back to the sand pile and found the river woman on her knees, holding the shovel base and filling bags with sand. The woman stood, waded through knee-deep mud, and dropped the bags on top of the wall before returning to the sand pile.

"Thank you," Jerene said, surprised the woman had joined her struggle. Everyone told her she was mad. No one believed she could fight the river. No one had ever believed she could keep her children safe. No one believed she'd kick out her ex, but she had. She proved them wrong then, she'd prove them wrong again.

By nightfall, they were pushing their way through waist-deep water. Jerene's breath, which had frozen her lungs, was now fiery hot, her face completely numb. Still, she shoveled, lifted, carried, and stacked. Nathan's voice called to her from within the roar of the river, begging her to hurry.

The river woman didn't seem to notice the cold, the rain, or the

THERE WERE NO GODS, NO SPIRITS, WALKING THE

OR KEEP HER AWAY FROM HIM? JERENE SHUDDERED.

water lapping at her chest. If anything, she was even more graceful in the dark water.

Jerene groped, dreamlike toward the wall, dragging the bags, her shoulders popping, her hands swollen and numb. In the rumble of the river, she heard Nathan's cry as he fell, slipping from her grasp, his eyes shock-wide, his body twisting down, down, swallowed by the hungry, muddy water.

He screamed.

"Nathan!" she cried, but her voice was lost to the clipping beat of helicopter blades above her.

She looked up. A spotlight fractured rain into shards of glass. Nathan's voice was gone, drowned by the roar of the river.

Before she could even think to move, the helicopter angled north, slowly searching the flooded orchard.

They didn't know where Nathan was either. Only the river knew.

"Mommy's coming," she whispered, "I promise. You'll be safe, you won't be alone. I'll fix your bear and give you a kiss." She took a step and slipped. Water closed over her head.

Nathan called, his words distorted by the rushing in her ears. A woman's voice, soft and soothing as a summer lullaby, joined his voice, calling her name. It was the river goddess, singing her down, leading her to darkness like a gentle siren. If she held still, if she didn't breathe, would the goddess take her to Nathan? She would do that. She would stop breathing if it meant she could touch her son again. Jerene kicked once, angling toward the voices.

But an image of Ellie filled her mind: Ellie crying, cradled in a stranger's arms. Ellie at the door, pink-faced with tears. Ellie alone.

Jerene had made her a promise too. She'd promised she'd come home.

The current tore at her clothing, found purchase, and dragged her to the surface. She gasped and opened her eyes.

The river woman held her. Thick pea-brown mud coated her hair and sculpted her features like an ancient clay-rendered idol. Her small hands were steady though Jerene coughed and shook.

The helicopter rounded, spotlight cutting day out of night, searching, finding her.

The river woman watched her, waited.

"How dare you," Jerene yelled, "how dare you take him away from me! You want something? I'll give you anything you want. You want the house?" Jerene turned and half-swam half-walked toward the nearly submerged sandbag wall. "Take it!" she screamed. She beat at the sandbags, her swollen hands slapping the heavy bags. "I don't want the house, I don't want anything. Just Nathan. Please, please give me back my baby."

A strong warm hand touched her shoulder. Jerene turned and saw the compassionate eyes of the river woman.

"Please," Jerene sobbed. "Take the house. Take me. I'll go. I'll do anything. Please bring Nathan back."

The river woman opened her mouth, but did not move her lips. Her voice caressed, resonated, from the air, the rain, the water around them.

"Choose," she said.

Let the river take her down, down to the silty womb where her son lay waiting. Or rise away to her daughter, helicopter and life jacket for wings.

Jerene wrapped her fingers around the river woman's wrists. Nathan needed her. Nathan needed to be safe.

His voice called out again and Jerene knew she had to see him, had to keep him safe, kiss his sweet face, and tell him he would never be alone again.

"My child needs me."

The river woman pulled her close. She held Jerene's face in both of her small strong hands, hands too warm for the icy water. Hands that had stacked the sand higher and higher, hands that had lifted her when she fell.

The river woman drew Jerene's face near and kissed her. Her mouth tasted of moss and grass and sweet anise root. Jerene breathed out, giving her breath to the woman, to the river, to the goddess.

Her thoughts flickered to Ellie, her rumple-haired, dark-eyed daughter. Would she understand why her mother never came home?

The river woman's mouth moved against hers and Jerene felt the last of her air pulled out of her lungs.

The kiss was an apology. For taking Nathan away. For not being able to bring him back. For killing her too, and leaving a child to grow up, alone.

A voice cried out, quieter than Nathan's, Ellie's tiny voice filled with fear.

No, no, no! She couldn't leave her alone, couldn't leave her baby too.

Jerene shoved away from the woman. Heat, and painful life, washed through her. She felt as if she stood in two bodies, as if the river at her chest were a part of her, the creatures, the soil and stones, rushing like blood, and solid as bone. The sway and pull of the deadly current soothed like a mother's arms, the thrumming rapids nothing but sleep-song, lulling and sweet.

Then she felt Nathan.

Laughter, as he splashed and danced in the swirling current, no longer bound to his body, but free. His joy filled her, touched her, vibrated through the rain, the water on her skin, the water within her; his happiness flowing through her veins, holding her aching body in a sweet, familiar hug. Forgiving her. Loving her.

Then he was gone. Jerene flailed in the current, sucking air and mouthfuls of water. The helicopter lights found her again, strobing over the roar of the river. Men shouted.

"Nathan," Jerene said, searching, and finding only the river woman before her.

"A child of the water," the woman said. "We are all children of water, of tears." She smiled gently and touched Jerene's cheek where tears mingled with rain.

Jerene's heart ached with each beat. Nathan would not be alone. The river woman would hold him, love him. But Ellie would have no one if she died. "Tell him I love him. Tell him he's safe now," Jerene said.

The woman moved slowly away, her voice filling the river, the air, her mind. "He already knows."

Jerene jerked as a man jumped into the river next to her. Slick rubber arms clamped around her waist. Orange flashed by as a life jacket dropped over her head. A rope yanked her up and out of the river.

Far below, at the edge of the helicopter lights, the river woman looked up. Just before the helicopter lights swung away, just before they hauled Jerene by sleeve, jeans, and butt into the helicopter, Jerene saw her dive into the water, taking her breath, her love, and one last kiss, down to the river's depth where Nathan lay sleeping.

WORLD. GODS NO LONGER CARED IF MORTALS CRIED.

After years of battle, it can sometimes be hard to recognize the true enemy.

THE CHILDREN OF HIS OLD AGE

To John Kaiine—with thanks for this scenario.

Ioll

When he came to live in the valley, at first I hoped that no great strife would result from it, since he was old. Even from the height where I watched him, this much was evident. Aside from anything else, he moved crookedly, limping. Yet, I could see he was strong. His scarred, pitted, olive hide seemed impervious to wounds—but he had the tokens about him his kind have in age. Keeping out of sight, I thought, perhaps he will cause us no real trouble.

There was plenty of game in that valley, I knew this well enough, deer and pig, and on the higher ledges, wild sheep. The broad stream had fish. He could have a pleasant time there, sunning himself, taking life easy, this old one. His dwelling had belonged to others, once, but lain empty some while. He saw to it, making it good for himself in the way they do, dragging in what he wanted, and his mighty treasure hoard, the things his kind gloat over. Old enemy. I hated him, of course, feared him. But I hoped. I hoped for peace. It was not to be. There was fire in him still.

Well, this is a tale then, of the war that goes ever on between dragons and men.

A month later, I went to visit the Wise Thinker. She resides over the hills, quite a way off. I had not traveled so far in many summers, and in the winter now, I keep at home. But it was autumn yet.

She sat outside her place, on the stone terrace under the crag, in the yellow sunlight. She is old as the hills, but beautiful still. I respectfully inclined my head, and stayed some distance from her, until she indicated I might draw near.

"Greetings, Ioll," she said. "What brings you?"

I told her of what had come to live in the valley.

"Indeed," she said. She moved stiffly, but with grace. Raising her head, she looked up at the clear fall sky. "I do not smell his smoke," she said.

It is true, their fires do not smell anything like our own. But did she think she could scent that stench from here? I said, "There has been not much of that. He keeps warm other ways so far. The dwelling he chose is snug. And he is past his prime, though he has the marks all over him."

"The marks?" she said. "Scars got from battle?"

"Yes, Thinker. Scars made by warriors such as I once was."

"But he is old," she repeated.

"He is not the difficulty," I said. She nodded, and I seated myself. Then I told her the rest.

BY TANITH LEE

ILLUSTRATION BY JANNY WURTS

Some days after he had installed himself, I had seen that he had young.

Whether they had come with him, and I had missed them, or they had arrived after, also unseen by me, I have no notion. But there they were.

I counted five. Five fierce and strong, leggy males, glossy-skinned with health, savagely playing together below his fastness, on the turf under the changing trees.

They had a look of him. They were more like he was than like each other—perhaps all born of different mothers.

I heard their raw bellowings, and caught the sharp metallic flash as they lightly wounded each other in their game.

After I had told the Wise Thinker this, we sat in silence for some while.

At last she said, "Ioll, am I right, you have your own sons?"

"A few," I said. "They are with their two mothers, in the north or westward."

"Are they strong, Ioll?"

"Thinker, they are strong—but for this they are much too young."

I saw her reckoning out the years. She sighed.

"Yes. You are sensible, Ioll."

I said, "I do not believe it quite an accident he has come to the valley. This is an empty land, but he knows or senses—"

"His ancient enemies?" she asked, nearly flirtatiously. "Does he sense *you* then, Ioll, who have slain so many of his kind?"

"Maybe," I said. "I think he would like his sons to cut their teeth on one such as I."

She rose. Smoothly black, only a little faded, she stood above me. Sometimes her advice is enigmatic, or a riddle. Sometimes outrageous, blatant, or apparently unhelpful.

"Will it be so then, Ioll?"

"Do you say it should, Thinker?"

"God decreed the war between his kind and ours. We will fight until one of our peoples is ended. You, therefore, or your sons."

"Am I not too old to fight?" I asked.

"Am I not," said she, "too old to counsel you?"

Flenz

It was my mother told me I'd be going to him, that morning, the very day I had to leave.

She called me in from the work I was doing, grinding down the bones by the bone-rock outside. She looked bitter as bad water, as she always did, but worse.

"Well, he wants you."

"Who wants me?" I was insolent to her now. The days when she used to knock me down, strike me, claw me, were gone. If I wanted I could break her long, ugly neck.

"Your sire."

That made me pause.

I had heard of him, of course. He was, seemingly, a mighty warrior, victorious over men and beasts. But if he had shown any interest in me, I'd never been aware of it.

"Let him," I said, "go wanting."

"Don't be a fool," she cried at once. "Do you think you have a choice? You have no more choice than I had, when he pinned me to the earth and got you on me."

"I won't go."

"You'll go. You'll go and grovel and thank him, and call him your master. Is your life so splendid here, doing the tasks none of the others will?"

"*Why*," I said, altering my voice, "does he want me?"

"You're his," she said.

"He took a while to remember."

"Now he has. Prepare yourself. You're to leave within the hour."

And so it was. I gave in quickly. It's no longer my way to make a great fuss over the unavoidable. If there's something I don't like, still I'll usually give in, or seem to. What I think, or mean to do later about this, isn't always so obvious.

Anyhow, it was a long, uninteresting journey, the only good part stopping once, to hunt, through the auburn woods. But finally I reached his lands.

His manner of living was one I'd seen plenty of already. He had his own style, of course. And he was greedy, a tyrant. That was clear from his dwelling, and how he managed it, and everything around. He had laid the country to waste for miles. Trees down, ground dug up, rivers polluted—burned areas crushed too often to grow a single thing anymore.

The moment I set eyes on him, I thought, *One more to hate.*

He was very big—I'm not full-grown, but still as brawny and powerful as many get by twice my age. But he towered. Old, naturally, with a limp, but that seemed to have stopped nothing, only marked him, in passing, like his combat-scars.

"Flenz," he said, showing me he knew my name. "Welcome, my son."

So I lowered my head respectfully. And he clouted me, as if playful, really to show me his vitality and supremacy. He nearly knocked me over.

I VALUED MY HIDING WHICH I COULD

There were the others I met presently, the other sons. I made out to be pleased. Doubtless so did they. We wrestled and showed off, and he looked happy.

That night we feasted. Meat and smoke and fires. The usual. But this time, no one sent me out to see to the bones.

Ioll

During the days of my youth, in such a situation, I would not have made much of a plan, nor consulted with another. With age, that had changed. And I valued my hiding-place on the high hill, from which I could watch my enemy and his brood, unseen.

They have some myth, I suspect, that we are always to be noticed—smelled—that we leave careless evidence of ourselves in every spot we frequent. But this is not so. Or not so of us all, especially those of us who have had to contend with *them*.

However, unseen and careful though I was, my study of them did not cheer me.

In the past, I would already have made my challenge. But now I was unsure. He alone I might deal with, but the young ones, no doubt, would attend him. So I would be, for all my remaining might and my guile, one against six. And those odds, now, did not seem ideal.

After nightfall, and seeing the flames flicker from their habitation among the stones, it did occur to me to go down and try to fire the evil nest entire. But I was not confident enough of my skill in that. Which is not to say I had grown nervous, only prudent. For if I failed, and even one of them escaped—as well they might, for I am not as robust as once I was—then everything could be to do again.

Besides, there is a story they are, being so friendly and extravagant with fire, immune to it. *I* know that is not always the case, I have seen several examples to the contrary. But some of them, for all I know, may be. And what if these ones were?

Eventually then, I made a decision. It went against my heart, but there. I thought that I must enlist the help of my sons, though young and untried.

They should not be alone, after all, but with me. I would teach them, stringently, what they must do. If all of them proved able, we should then be six to six.

Flenz

We'd been with him less than a month when he told us what was up.

A couple of them looked scared enough. I admit, a coil of sparks

sprang off up my spine, and every inch of me tingled with something—fear, astonishment—*wonder*?

To kill one of those monstrous creatures—those *things*—

"I thought there was nothing like that in this country," I boldly said to him, my *father*. "I thought these lands belonged to our kind."

"Think again," he said. And cuffed me, but in his most *playful* mode—I only rocked where I stood.

Next day he began to train us.

It was tough, bloody. We got smashed about and no mistake. One of them—my half-brothers—muttered, *"He's worse than an army of them."* A couple more agreed, secretively—when *he* was near they fawned.

But to say he was worse was rubbish. *They* and they only, were the true enemy. God decreed the struggle between them and us, a contest for everything, land, water, peace—even riches, for I too had heard of their hoards of gold and jewels—for the whole earth. They were formed in the image of the Devil. Although I hated my father, and mostly everyone I'd met so far of my own people, *they* were the kernal and essence of *all* hates. And they hated us too. Men and dragons—eternal foes—by God's will.

An evening came, and he swaggered before us, and he said, "You've done well. You're ready. So, it's tomorrow."

Then we knew it was only one night from us—and tomorrow we would go out to join in war. To the death.

I went up to sleep in my own cramped space, among the others. Aside from me, I didn't know who slept or who didn't, pretending. We hadn't confided much in each other. Or, they didn't in me ...

I myself didn't sleep, but lay as if I did. Then I acted coming to, and stumbled off heavily, as if to make water. But that wasn't what I was at.

Outside, the Moon was full, a tawny fall Moon, heavy with the aging year.

I looked around, away. In the lit-up dark, anything might be anything. I chose my path with care.

Ioll

The one who was to take my message north and west, was gone with it, and I had come back to my watching-place. I had been away three days, two nights.

When I peered over and down, their nest was in darkness, just a heap of stone, where I might imagine nothing lived at all, saving the strange look of it.

Although I had sent for my sons, I remained uneasy. I had even told my messenger to state that, if unready, they were not to come. It was a great way for them to travel, besides. Might they even not be strong enough yet for such a journey?

And then, oddly, I thought of the old one's young, how they too were so youthful, and perhaps not ready, and that I should not relish killing them, for it was hard to hate a thing unformed.

Musing on all this, I kept my watch, and then the Moon came up from the valley, growing always whiter as it left the Earth farther and farther below.

I had lifted my head to gaze at the Moon a moment when I heard something moving on the track beneath.

My eyes are older, as all of me is, or I should have seen him before that. My ears too, those years ago, would have detected him long before.

Now he came toward me, stealthy—he thought. Cautious, he thought.

I waited, still as the rocks around.

Flenz

There hadn't been much of worth in my little existence. Nothing very kind, and never beautiful. Except, if I'm honest, the world. I mean, what's natural—the woods and hills, the sky—everywhere people haven't touched.

And then—I saw him.

How to explain this. I can't. Yet I have to, since otherwise I'll seem a madman, and worse, a traitor. But maybe I am. Well.

But he was—beautiful. Like the world is. Like the starry night. Just like that. Dark and glimmering and still as stone. And his great head turned and his eyes, like polished diamonds, were watching me, expecting me.

Although I saw his beauty, that wasn't the first thing I thought of, of course. The first thing was—*terror*. Too afraid even for a prayer to God, too terrified even, strangely, to wet myself. I, too, turned to stone.

What I'd intended was simply to escape. From my father, from his stinking dragon-chase—from all of it. All the cruelties and petty bullyings and big, violent bullyings. I don't know even if I *did* credit the dragons we'd glibly spoken of. I'd gone along with it, had to. Then I'd run off, and I'd thought I could be away over the hills and somewhere else by morning. But now I'd met a dragon on the hill. And it was real as the Moon above.

PLACE ON THE HILL, FROM WATCH MY ENEMY AND HIS BROOD, UNSEEN.

Then—it breathed. Just the slightest vapor of smoke came from its jaws. But I thought I was dead at once.

No point in lying. My legs gave. I went down flat. I just lay there, smelling the hill grass and thinking nothing but fear.

And then, then he spoke.

I'd never been told this, that they can speak—and they can speak in our language too, the tongue of men. Although it sounds peculiar in their mouths, like something coming through a cave full of water, so for a while I didn't know he was speaking at all, so perhaps that's why no one else had ever known they speak, or informed us of it.

"Get up," the dragon patiently said to me, for the 20th time.

"What?" I gabbled.

"Stand. You have no claw. I am not in need of food. Shall I not harm you?"

"Claw—a sword?—No, he locks the big weapons up at night—I don't even have a knife, like the others, not of my own.... Not hungry?"

"The valley has food animals," the dragon said, reasonably. I was finding it easier to understand him. My fear had vanished—died. His breath was wonderful—like incense. I'd always heard in the songs and tales they reeked. "Why are you here?" he asked.

I said, "Running away. Fighting dragons isn't my ambition." And I don't know either how I was so coherent now. I'd gone mad, no doubt.

The dragon said, "You are of mankind, but do not wish to kill a dragon—or to see one killed?"

"No."

"Why is that?"

"I've no quarrel with dragons. I mean, I don't *know* dragons—I—"

He said, "Then I may be glad to let you live."

Did he lie? Had I lied? Why did he trust me—why did I trust him? Where had my fear fled to?

He seemed to see into me. Right inside. Not body—mind. History. Every blow, and every blow I'd turned away. My measure. Perhaps I wasn't important.

"You are his son," the dragon said. "What of him?"

"They say *he's* killed dragons many times," I answered. "That's his fame. I was always hearing about it. He's killed plenty of his own kind, too. I mean other men."

"And the rest of his young?"

"Young—his other sons, you mean? I don't know. I think they're scared, like me. Of him—of you."

The dragon said, "Long ago, men lived in your father's house. They hunted my kind, they slew us, we were driven away. It is God's law."

"God's law," I agreed, lamely.

He looked at me with his marvellous eyes. "I am old," he said, "but when your grandsons' grandsons are old, I shall still walk in the world."

"Yes," I said.

"Your life is too short to rob you of it."

The weirdness of all this had gone to my head—or it was the wine from the feast earlier. "Are we breaking some holy rule?" I asked him. "I mean, by not fighting?"

"Yes."

I said, "Perhaps God isn't a tyrant. Perhaps God is just, and we don't see it. Perhaps God prefers us—*not* to fight."

"Then God must give a sign," said the dragon. "For I will let *you* go by. But those others below I must hate and I must kill. And I and my beloved sons may die in the attempt."

"Don't die," I said. My voice was nearly pleading, startling me. "You've said, you're meant to outlive us all."

But then he turned from me. I was dismissed. Something happened inside me. Again, I can't explain it. But I ran away, over the hill, I ran away into the night, to the next part of my short human life. And yes, before two days had passed, I wondered if I had dreamed it. Until I heard the news from there. And then—then I truly believed in God and dragons—both.

HIS EYES LIKE POLISHED DIAMONDS WERE WATCHING ME, EXPECTING ME.

Ioll

To begin with I debated with myself, when he had gone, why I had let him live, that boy, that man-child, young of the old one in the house in the valley. Even though I knew why, and had even told the boy why.

I too have sons. I too—am old.

In youth, I had considered them pleasantly, my children. In age they are much more. And even the children of my ravening enemy in the valley—even they.... The Wise Thinker may one day, perhaps, unravel these thoughts for me, or not, depending on her mood, and if her scales have been sufficiently warmed by the Sun.

I let him go, the boy. He ran away. But I had seen before he did that he was no longer afraid of me. No, in his face was that expression, that emotion I have found otherwise only in the faces of my kind, when they bow their heads before one that they revere—and love.

How curious. It puzzles me very much. For it is yet to be war between us, to the end, of this I am certain even now.

Yet, too, I had asked for a sign of something other, and this sign came.

All night I waited there. In the morning I looked for the usual activities and business in the old enemy's dwelling.

At first they seemed as ever. Then all changed.

There was a loud outcry. The sort of shouting and clamor that might have started if they had distinguished me upon the hill—which they had not. Then the noise died, and the whole place seemed to sink in upon itself, to a silence and a shadow.

I waited on. I watched.

Night came, and then another day. The skies moved, Sun, Moon, and stars, but in the dwelling made of stones, nothing moved at all. And then dawn again broke through the east, and showed me the people who had been in the old one's place, spilling out of its openings, and pouring away like a rushing river. They carried their possessions with them, and some of his, too. I saw many of them pulled along chests or sacks, and I heard these clinking, even from the high hill, and caught now and then the glitter of gold. It came to me they robbed him of his hoard of precious things. They took his animals too, the creatures kept for food or riding.

In the end, the habitation appeared empty. Birds flew round, and then they flew away. Evening drew in, then dark. Not a single one of their tame fires burned up.

Thinking of it, what I had seen, how they had deserted that place, I knew that he alone I had not seen emerge from there—he alone, and his five remaining sons.

Then those five boys did come out of the place. I saw them clear in the Moon's light. They ran away and away, just as the other had, the one who climbed the hill. But these other five, they ran in crazy fear—as if followed by nightmares, that was how they ran, though none—nothing—pursued them. I noted plainly enough then, they were not anything to dread. They were afraid amply of men—no dragon-slayers.

But even after this, *he* did not leave his dwelling.

Thereafter the place looked void.

So it has continued.

He must be there, in the pile of it. But he makes no sound, he lights no fires.

Winter has arrived by now, and turned the bare trees white. The stream which curls through the valley is changed to something like the gleaming pale drops that I keep in my own treasure hoard, under the hill. And still, he does nothing in his place of stone, and so I know that he is dead, my enemy, and that peace has returned, for this while.

Just before the whiteness fell, two of my sons reached me. They are lean, limber, perfect. The joy I take in them is beyond all joys, and doubled because I need not risk them so early.

When winter is done, I shall conduct them to the Wise Thinker, so they may learn their secret names. For now I am content. The ordained conflict with mankind—if so it still is—seems far away as that solitary star I see shining, above my enemy's empty house.

Flenz

It was his other sons killed the old man. I heard it in the first town I reached. The market was buzzing with the gossip. Seemingly they were more frightened of meeting a dragon than of him. So they went in a gang and hacked our father to bits in his bed. So much for him. They had made the plot, but not trusted or told me, only hesitating that night until I went out, to put it into action.

God knows what kind of story will get made of all this. Men will say the dragon did it, I should think, killed him, and all of us. What do I care? I've seen a dragon, spoken with him, and lived. And it was he taught me, when I have sons of my own, to be kind to them. It's the easiest thing in the world to make a life, or to take a life—but to let another alone to *live*—yes, that's the hard thing. It's the thing God does. ❧

DISTANT CORNERS.COM
the last beacon of sanity
DISTANT CORNERS.COM-- AN ONLINE SCI-FI, HORROR & CULT GENRE EXPERIENCE WITH INFINITE INFO AND INCREDIBLE INTERACTION. BELOW ARE JUST A FEW OF OUR EVER-GROWING FEATURES...
REEL O
MEDIA GRANDE
IF IT'S INFORMATION ON EVERYTHING TV AND MOVIES THAT YOU CRAVE, GO NO FURTHER. MEDIA GRANDE IS ONE HOT CUP O' JOE. SIT DOWN, RELAX, AND FIND OUT ALL THERE IS TO KNOW CURRENT, FUTURE-- AND A FEW GEMS FROM THE PAST.
Mr. Grey
ORIGINAL SINS
FEEL THE NEED TO CHEW ON FRESH BRAINS? CLICK ON THE ORIGINAL SINS SECTION FOR ALL ORIGINAL STORIES, INTERACTIVE MEDIA, STORIES AND MORE BY SOME OF TODAY'S BEST ARTISTS, WRITERS AND PROGRAMMERS
WACKED NEWS
EVERYTHING LEFT OF THE DIAL, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW. WACKED NEWS FEATURES DAILY NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD. U.F.O.S, OBITUARIES, WHO'S SLEEPING WITH WHO... ALL THE GOOD CRAP STOP BY AND GET EDUCATED
PARAFANALIA
YOU KNOW YOU WANT IT YOU KNOW YOU NEED IT. SO GO AHEAD... GET YOUR FIX HERE. ONLY THE BEST SCI-FI AND HORROR MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB.
ASYLUM
HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY THE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD SPEAK PERFECT LATIN? THEN COME FIND OUT THAT YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE IN DISTANT CORNERS' VERY OWN COMMUNITY-- WHITE PICKET FENCES, CHATS, FORUMS, FREE EMAILS, STRAIGHT JACKETS AND SO MUCH MORE
DISTANT CORNERS
PLUS
IMMERSE YOURSELF IN OUR BIZARRE ARCADE OF THE FUTURE-PAST!
GAMES
25¢
PLAY
©2000 DISTANT CORNERS
ART & DESIGN by ELI J STONE

DISTANT CORNERS .COM

THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR HORROR SCI-FI FANTASY & CULT

"Jack." The principal of the school stood at my doorway and the kids turned to look at him. "Knock knock, Jack. I want a word with you. In the hallway."

I left the chalkboard, and when I reached Olson he took me sharply by the elbow, his habit with both staff and students when he wished to convey something serious. "It's Agnes. She's in her classroom and you need to talk to her. I'll watch yours."

I nodded stupidly and walked down the halls, down the stairs. The refrain from "A Happy Wanderer" warbled from a music class, and I could smell janitorial supplies and grass cuttings the kids had tracked in from outside. Sometimes it was difficult to know how to appear before students, times like this, as I turned the corner and saw my wife's pupils standing in the hall, looking troubled. Their discomfort increased at the sight of me and I badly wanted to say something friendly. When I got to the door, a girl announced, "It was Tim who did it, Mr. Errington. He sassed her." The boy named Tim looked teary-eyed and nervous. "I didn't know she would cry!" he blurted.

"It's not your fault," I said truthfully, and placed my hand on his head. "Why doesn't everyone go to the library for a while?"

Hey Hey Something Some

By Jan Lars Jensen
Illustration by John Picacio

If we think we remember our childhoods, chances are very good we don't.

thing

They shuffled away and I proceeded into the room where Agnes sat alone, her elbows on the desktop and both hands covering her face. They were pale but red at the knuckles.

"Agnes," I said. "Hi."

"Jack," she said. "What's the matter with me?"

She didn't lower her hands and I supposed she didn't want to show her face. I stood behind her and rubbed her shoulders. Vivid sunset paintings hung on the wall and notebooks from an interrupted lesson lay on the desks. Through the window, I saw the merry-go-round and slide gleaming in the afternoon sunshine. As we remained like this, the first of the buses pulled into view, turning down the driveway, the sound of a big diesel engine reminding me that school was almost over for the day and those kids in the library would soon be picked up and delivered to their homes, where they would tell their parents what had happened in class, and the parents would know that the teacher had had a breakdown.

Agnes must take a stress leave. The realization made me feel guilty—proof that I wasn't suffering as badly as she—but I could feel her sobbing through my hands, and I knew the leave of absence was necessary.

The buzzer sounded. Buses came and went. Our janitor stepped into the room pushing his wheeled trash barrel before him and I asked if he could give us a few minutes. Agnes went through the motions of putting on her jacket and slinging her purse over one shoulder, and while I had her moving, I coaxed her out of the room.

That night, I lay awake. Although she had required the aid of a tranquilizer, I was glad Agnes could sleep.

She had been pregnant for six months, until two Mondays earlier, on an unscheduled, drop-in visit to the clinic, her obstetrician had placed a stethoscope to her belly and heard no heartbeat. Our baby no longer lived, and the shock struck us all like a cannonball. He had to be removed from Agnes, of course, and if that procedure did not undermine our souls, the funeral that followed did. We gave him a name, thinking we could not bury an anonymous child. We attached a word to that boy who had been a wild idea less than a year ago, and I wondered if that wasn't a mistake, if maybe we should have withheld his name so perhaps we wouldn't find ourselves in this state now; maybe we would have buried a vague concept instead of having buried a son.

In my dreams I had seen him, I had seen him alive and on his feet, and the unexpectedness of it woke me.

Or was it a sound?

A rhythm tapped on the street. With minimal disturbance I removed myself from bed and went to the window. Through branches of an alder, I could make out motion, someone hopping on the far sidewalk. Quietly I opened the window and stepped onto the roof, positioning myself so I had a view of him, and he seemed summoned from my imagination, a boy, playing hopscotch. I shook myself. It was past 1 AM, and as I focused I saw this was no boy but an adult, playing, alone.

He stopped.

He turned and scanned the area, and when he spotted me on the roof he raised an arm in greeting.

I returned to our room and closed the blinds. I paced, and wondered if I should just get back under the covers. But after this vision, I wouldn't be able to sleep. Agnes did not stir as I pulled on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt.

Outside, the weather seemed suspended, the air neither warm nor cold. Few lights were on, and I glanced at our house before proceeding to the street. The stranger had returned to his game. He wore trousers and his jacket lay folded on the steps with a tie on top. He picked up a stone and said, "It's difficult to resist, isn't it? The sound of another child playing."

"I haven't been a child for … years."

"I wonder if anyone has explored that idea. The sound of play as a lure to other children."

The notion seemed to hold him for a moment before he walked to the end of his chalk drawing.

"Do you know where there's another hopscotch pattern like this? On the pavement of the Roman forum. It's old." He studied it, appreciatively. "Can't you sleep?" he asked.

"Something woke me up. A dream. Or you."

"Sleep disturbances are an indicator of stress. Exercise is one way to be rid of it."

I sat on the steps. "Is that why you're out here?"

"You mean: Why is a grown man playing outside, well after midnight? I'm a professor of folklore at Darby College. My specialty is childhood games, and I believe to truly understand them you must experience them directly."

His face was round and something about it, when he smiled, made me think of the Moon appearing from behind clouds. His eyes were almond shaped and he had long, thin fingers, and when I asked my next question he brought his hands together in a single clap: "What's there to know about kids' games?"

"So much!" he said. "Consider 'Ring Around the Rosy.' You may have heard that it came out of the plague years; 'a ring of rosies' refers to symptoms of plague—sores around the mouth and breath that smells like flowers. 'We all fall down' is what happens in the end: Death. But what motivated children to make up this rhyme? Why walk in a circle while reciting it? Does it have any relationship to druidic rituals for warding off maladies? Interesting questions, but even more startling is how this rhyme came to us: through children, passed orally, from generation to generation. That seems a very unreliable medium, yet here we are, falling down with an idea from a different century, a different continent."

"These games are entwined with our history."

"And one is entwined tighter than most," he said, and pointed at me. "I call it 'Hey Hey Something Something.'"

"That one I don't remember."

"No adult can remember it. But you may have played it."

I frowned.

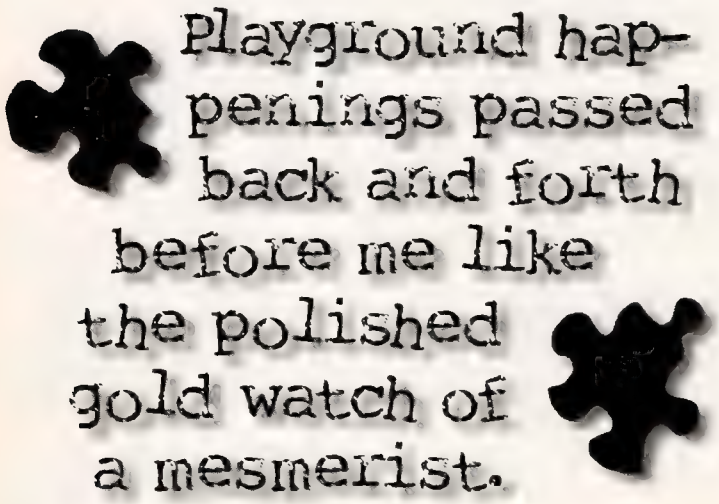
"Children's games are stepping-stones to more mature ways of thought," he said. "That's their appeal. Kids sense the beginnings of a new paradigm in themselves, but lack the skill to articulate it, or incorporate it into their behavior right away. Games serve as bridges. They nurture more complex ideas about self and groups and social interaction. 'Hey Hey Something Something' has formed—evolved, if you will—around a very specific, transitory phase in mental development. In fact the game is so tuned to this phase that it cannot be understood once higher levels of thinking have been reached. The older you get, the less capable you are of knowing it."

"We forget it."

"No. We become incapable of knowing it."

"How can we be incapable of knowing something?"

"It defies our ideas in such a fundamental way that we are unable to store it in our mind."



"But we could watch kids playing this game. Or they could describe it to us."

"As a concept, though, it will not stick."

"What if we read a description?"

He shook his head. This idea spooked me a little even while I tried to dismiss it as an academic's whimsy. "If it's unknowable to adults," I said, "how can you be sure it's there in the first place?"

"I infer its existence, like a physicist infers the existence of phantom particles. The name of the game is 'Hey Hey Something Something.' The last two words elude me and are perhaps unavailable, as well. I believe the game involves hiding, but not seeking. Players are temporarily elevated in status over others. Partial observations occur in documents from England, Europe, even the Ottoman empire."

"Maybe you've found fragments of other games."

"No—it is a single entity, a concept that has evolved alongside our notions of society. Something that has accompanied our progress, shadowed it; an idea that sustains itself through our psychological need for it."

Lights came on in the upper window of a nearby apartment.

"I better get home," I said.

"I'm Malcolm Welfing. What's your name?"

"Jack Errington."

"Jack!" he said. "A teacher, right?"

I must have looked surprised.

"Your manner of speaking," he explained. "Your house. I have good intuition."

"I imagine that helps, searching for a secret game."

His smile was long. "Indeed it does."

Back in our bedroom, I checked the window and saw the street was empty.

Did kids even play games anymore? Games that didn't involve graphics and a joystick? The answer was yes, and it came to me when I stood monitoring the playground, sometimes thinking of 'Hey Hey Something Something.' I watched them in big groups, the younger ones especially, socializing, their interaction sometimes blurring into play, the play sometimes stabilizing into rules and leaders. The buzzer ended the break and I followed the swarm toward the building, and had almost stepped inside when I did one last check of the grounds.

Our monkey bars are old—sturdy and old, a structure of iron rising in pentagons from the ground to create an overall cage of potential exercise, seven feet high at its apex, where the girl ignoring the bell hung by her knees. I gestured to indicate she should come along. "Recess is finished," I called, but she made no sign of having heard. I walked across the lawn.

"What's the matter?"

I leaned over, trying to see her face right-side up. I didn't recognize her, but I didn't know every kid.

"Can't you get down? Are you scared?"

She said nothing.

"Don't you want to go to class?"

I entered the cage of bars. She was breathing normally and nothing in her expression suggested distress. She looked like a third-grader.

"You don't want to upset Ms. Molag, do you, being tardy?"

I felt the sunlight on my neck, the playground drained of sound.

"If you don't come down, I'll have to force you." I circled her. "Wouldn't it be easier if you did it yourself?"

Nothing.

"Fine."

I held her midsection and attempted to unhook her from her perch. She didn't struggle but tightened her hold on the bar so it was impossible to remove her without risk of injury.

"If you don't come down right now I'll get Principal Olson out here." I dreaded involving him in another circumstance beyond my control, but having said it, I was obliged to follow through. He came out and loosened his tie and scolded the girl before also declaring that we would remove her by force. "Or maybe we should just leave you until your legs give out!"

She remained hanging.

Olson cursed under his breath before directing me to hold her by the chest. I did so and watched him climb the monkey bars in his dress shoes until he was overhead looking hot and perturbed, his tie hanging down. The girl stiffened, and Olson struggled to grip one of her ankles. "I've had enough foolishness for one day, young lady." She was sun-heated and rigid in my arms. A car rolled into the lot and slowed so the passengers could watch our struggle. Olson held one foot in his hands and clenched his jaw as he worked to pull her leg up and over. "Call your parents ... enough foolishness ..."

He was florid with exertion. The girl kept her arms at her sides. I stared at the pattern of paisleys on the principal's tie, and a bead of sweat rolled off his face and landed on the top of my head.

It was a long afternoon.

After Olson and I had finally gotten her off the monkey bars and pulled her inside, we spent more frustrating time trying to determine her identity. The principal stared and stared at her, and I could tell he was mad at himself for not being able to remember her name. "Becky?" he said. "Is it Becky?" We were reduced to bringing her from room to room, asking teachers if she was one of theirs, and after we eliminated the most likely classes, another possibility struck me.

"Do you even go to this school?"

She didn't answer, but after phoning around, Olson determined she was missing from the Dutch Reformed Christian School several blocks away.

"They sent someone over in a green station wagon to pick her up," he told me later. "They weren't even grateful. Didn't even thank me."

"Did you find out her name?"

"Pieternella!" he said. He shook his head in disbelief.

Returning home, I was anxious to tell Agnes about this incident, but I couldn't see her downstairs and she didn't answer my call. I went upstairs, and found her in the room we had prepared for the baby. The wallpaper was of fairy-tale pigs and wolves. A mobile hung over the empty crib. Agnes sat on a child's stool in the corner.

"You OK?" I asked.

"Perfectly fine."

She didn't ask me about my day so I launched into a summary on my own, saving for last the girl who had hung from the monkey bars. Agnes nodded but didn't look at me. She had been on stress leave for one week, and I got the feeling she had too much time to think and stew; she nodded at everything I said, nothing was unexpected or worthy of comment. After I had stopped and endured a lengthy silence, I said, "Maybe you need a project. Maybe you should redecorate this room."

She snapped, "Maybe you need a project!"

I retreated a step, and felt as if I was swallowing a stone. We both needed something, and soon. But what?

Agnes should get pregnant again. That, I thought, was the best remedy for her and us, but if I wasn't already reluctant to put this idea forward, I became absolutely wary after seeing her toss her maternity clothes into a big garbage bag.

"Are you throwing those out?" I asked.

"Guess I could donate them to the Salvation Army," she replied.

The deeper question—was she giving up on the idea of pregnancy totally—went unasked, unanswered. What was wrong?

At school I took on monitoring duties from my colleagues, and I tried to think what exactly had done this to her, as playground happenings passed back and forth before me like the polished gold watch of a mesmerist. Waves of children rushed from one end of the yard to the other, with no organizing principle other than "boys chase girls." The merry-go-round spun like a dynamo, a boy spinning it faster and faster while squealing passengers clung to the rails,

and eventually a game did crystallize, it emerged from the rumble-tumble of lunch as I heard a participant speak the words:

"Mother may I?"

A group of kids stood facing "mother," the sister of one of my students. Justin, take two baby steps. "Mother may I?" he asked dutifully. Mother gave instructions; she had absolute authority, I remembered, dictating who walked and what way, expecting to be asked permission. More kids broke from what they were doing and turned to her, frozen until the little ritual was observed. How big was a baby step? How did you know what a banana step was? We had known in my day, when we stood across a different lawn facing a different mother, listening to her directions and speaking the courtesy, a lesson in humility, playground education passed down through generations of children.

Betty, take one choo choo step. "Mother may I?"

I remembered kids from the neighborhood standing around me, as we looked to mother for instruction. The merry-go-round was a blur. I remembered childhood, putting a buttercup under a friend's chin. Do you like butter? The glow off the petals told you so. I remembered faces of childhood friends whom I hadn't thought of in years. What were they doing now? Who knew? In the domain of memories they remained forever children, not aged by a single day. I remembered standing on somebody's lawn, playing a similar game. I remembered the far-off sound of adult voices. On the playground now the kids crouched where they stood; the girl was no longer mother but still held control. I remembered twilight, and staying out longer than I was supposed to, and sour cherries, and band-aids. I looked at my finger, which had a cut from a piece of glass. I looked up; other kids crouched on the ground, their backs turned to me, hiding though they remained visible in the Sun. Hey. I couldn't see any faces, and they all seemed so far away, but the voices were familiar, the words, the rules. Hey! I held up my finger and saw a band-aid around it. When I looked again, the leader was pointing at me. Words were repeated, and I felt my legs twitch, I wanted to do what it was that you did whenever someone called out the name of the game, not "Mother May I?" anymore, but another one I knew, I thought I knew, I knew something about how it went, didn't I? I could remember. Almost. I shaded my eyes trying to see the other kids for clues, but they were so far away, and turned from me, they hid in the open, their faces hidden so it was impossible to see who had spoken the words. What was I supposed to do? I held my finger before me and the band-aid was gone, the flesh healed.

What was I supposed to…?

I shook my head and rubbed my eyes.

I stood on the grass, alone. The merry-go-round was motionless and crows jabbed at a dropped sandwich. The kids had gone inside. The buzzer must have sounded.

I spun until the edifice of the school loomed over me, and I made my way to it, hoping it might lend me clarity.

Agnes was crying. Sobbing. A foreign soap opera she'd taped during the day was playing. I hated how these tawdry programs tapped into her emotions, and meant to say so.

"Agnes."

She looked at me.

"It's not worth …"

"What?"

"You don't. It's not."

"Go ahead and say it!"

I paddled my hands in the air but …

"At lunch hour," I said. "I think I …"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"It's just."

I stood, frustrated. My entire afternoon had been like this, the kids giving me funny looks as I struggled to complete sentences.

Agnes rewound the video to the point where I had interrupted.

I drank a glass of water, then tried reading a novel but had to review the same page several times before any meaning sank in, until finally I tossed the book aside and put on a jacket. Exercise seemed a sure way to unmuddle my head. A brisk walk in the chill October evening would do me good, and when I got outside the first gust of wind was like resuscitation from a divine source. The autumnal sound of leaves skirting along the curb was another welcome stimulation.

On my stroll, I passed a park where adults held hands in a ring and tramped round and round. It seemed so peculiar that I got a closer look, and heard their voices, Ring around the rosy, pocketful of posies … One of them was the professor, Malcolm Welfing. They all fell down, without laughter.

"Jack!" said Malcolm. "Glad you could join us."

"I'm just working off some energy."

"You don't want to play games with us?"

"Why would I? What are you doing out here?"

He looked at me. "Research. Like I told you."

"Right. Sorry. I forgot about that."

"Is everything OK, Jack?"

"Got a lot on my mind right now," I said simply.

"Of course, of course. Like what?"

I rolled my eyes skyward.

"I don't mean to pry," he said.

But it wasn't his question that had made me hesitate.

"Has something happened at school, Jack?"

"I blanked out for a while. Watching the kids today."

"That's peculiar. What were the kids doing?"

I shrugged. "Usual lunchtime playground stuff."

"Oh?" Malcolm exchanged looks with the others. "Any sign of 'Hey Hey Something Something'?"

"Of what?"

He smiled, but didn't repeat his question. "A few years ago we interviewed someone," he said, "a camp counselor from Spokane, Washington, who was having memory problems, like you. He was in charge of keeping kids busy, teaching them how to make a fire without matches, use a compass, that kind of thing. But he was also in a position to learn from the kids, always looking for new ways to entertain them. We tried to establish what games he might have encountered, but when questioned along those lines he became less articulate, less able to concentrate—dreamy."

"And?"

Malcolm stared at me. "That's it. I just thought the story might interest you."

I pulled the zipper of my jacket up to my chin. Malcolm rejoined hands with his group, possibly to keep warm. "I need to keep moving," I said. "How late do you people go on like this?"

"Until our mothers call us home!" one of them quipped.

When I imagine it now I see myself walking away as their wheel started turning again, even though they were not reciting the rhyme, staring at one another with smiles on their faces.

The Bible reports that Roman soldiers teased Jesus while He was in their custody. They blindfolded him and struck him from behind, saying, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" This was a child's game, cruel and old, one that may have been ancient even when those centurions smacked the Messiah; a picture in an Egyptian tomb depicts the same game being played, around 2000 BC. In England it persists still, although known for the past three or four centuries as "Hot Cockles." I became an amateur student of games and how they linger throughout the ages, how they move from culture to culture. I was sent a package of materials that started me on this path, but it came later, after what happened at school, the first confrontation.

A young teacher burst into the staff room and announced that someone was parked on the street, watching the kids.

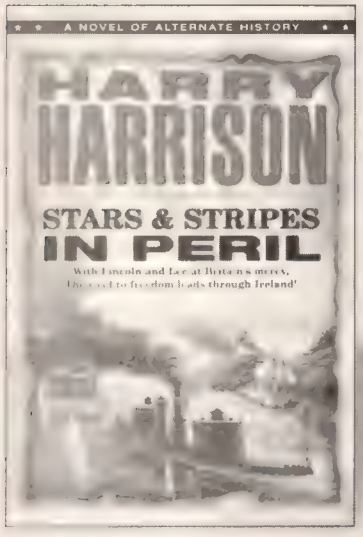
"Should I call the police?" she asked Olson.

"We better find out what's going on, first."

I joined him, emerging to brilliant sunshine. We quickly spotted the suspicious vehicle, an old Volkswagen van parked near the driveway, and as we walked over the driver lowered something he'd

DEL REY

Surprising encounters with unexpected worlds

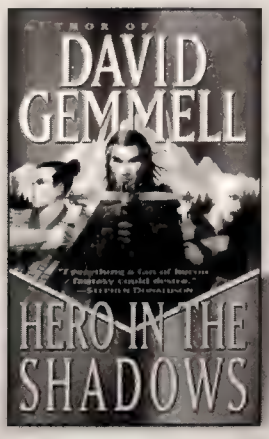


Robert E. Lee, William Sherman, and Ulysses S. Grant pool their military expertise as America's post–Civil War conflict with Great Britain rages on. The thrilling sequel to *Stars & Stripes Forever*, in the Alternate History saga by "one of science fiction's most prolific and accomplished craftsmen."

A Del Rey Hardcover

The definitive source for all key data on the characters, vehicles, weaponry, droids, alien species, and historic battles in the extraordinary realm of *Star Wars*. Now revised, expanded, and fully updated with one and a half times more material than the previous edition!

A Del Rey/LucasBooks Trade Paperback



The monstrous inhabitants of an ancient ruined city, long imprisoned by magic, are poised to break free and wreak hideous destruction on all living things. And only a small band of heroes, led by Waylander the Slayer, stand against them. The bestselling new Drenai adventure by the author of *Legend*.

A Del Rey Paperback

DEL REY Stories That Define Imagination
A Division of The Ballantine Publishing Group

Reader Reviews | Contests | Special Offers | Free newsletter
http://www.randomhouse.com/delrey/
Free book previews | Inside information | Author interviews

A game lurks within our culture, perpetuated by generations of children, but unknown in the world of adults.

been aiming at the kids, which I thought might be a gun until I saw it laying on the passenger seat: a camcorder. The driver gripped the steering wheel and stared straight ahead until Olson banged his fist on the vehicle.

"What's your business, loitering here?" he demanded.

"No concern of yours."

"I happen to be principal of this school and I'm making you my concern."

The driver gave me a significant look.

"I've taken your license plate number," Olson went on. "And I'll be phoning the police, believe it."

"I'm not doing anything illegal."

"Well, whatever the hell you're doing, I suggest you do it elsewhere."

The man looked like he was going to speak but instead turned the ignition and put the van into gear.

"Give me your name," Olson said. "I want your name, buster!"

He said, "I won't be returning," and with a squeal of tires, departed.

The van we never saw again, but other cars came and parked during the breaks over the next few days, anonymous strangers staring at the children, holding cameras or simply jotting notes. "What the hell is going on here?" Olson asked me. "What do they want?"

"I'm not positive, but I think they're interested in how children play."

"Is that so?"

"I met one of them, a few weeks ago. He mentioned a project that might explain this."

"You tell your friend we don't want people hanging around our school. Kapish?"

I hardly know him, I almost said.

I certainly wasn't sure where to find him.

In the evenings I would go for walks, alone, of course, and I hoped to run into him. There was no listing for Malcolm Welfing in the phone book, so I couldn't determine where he lived. Finally it dawned on me that I could try Darby College. I phoned and asked the receptionist to put me through to Malcolm Welfing, and she said she wasn't aware of anybody by that name. The Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, even the English department, I tried them all but nobody had heard of him. At school I made use of our Internet access and plugged his name in a search engine which returned a hundred or so hits but didn't help clarify the matter. That same week, Olson called me into his office to show me a letter he'd received from my "friend" Professor Malcolm Welfing, on Darby College stationery, stating that he and his grad students were researching child behavior, and that teachers shouldn't be alarmed if they saw people hanging around near the grounds during recess and lunch hour.

"Do profs use college stationery?" I said.

"Why do you ask?"

"I think the guy might be a fraud. Not a professor of anything."

"I'm definitely reporting this to the police."

So over the next few days a cruiser would occasionally show up, and once or twice, another vehicle sped off. For a while that seemed to scare them away—whoever they were. For a while, I forgot about them.

Nights, I would lay on our bed, and make gestures of intimacy toward Agnes, but she rejected these by rolling over or standing to put herself out of reach. Once she rambled on about restarting an old habit, smoking. I watched her dig through our cupboards until she found a heavy ashtray shaped like a swan; she handled it like an artifact fallen from the sky, then abruptly put it on the kitchen floor and left it there. While she slept, I swung out of bed to stand at the window and look at pools of light cast by street lamps, waiting for profound illumination, or the appearance of a mysterious stranger.

But this was not where they would come.

Soon I wore a long coat doing my monitoring duty at school, and the kids bundled up, too. Days grew colder, but not too cold for energetic play. They moved around the playground like marbles on the deck of a boat, and I lost track of them as individuals and saw them as motes in a pattern of flux. Rules to describe their behavior teased my mind. I heard voices, but it was like listening to a television as you drift toward sleep.

Playing. A game. Hey. They were playing a game.

Children hid in the open. They called without showing their faces. A child in the center was elevated over the others. Hey. She pointed at kids and called out names. The phrase resurfaced. Hey. Hey—and that second, mumbled, word, scrambled, maybe slipped from a nonsense language of no meaning to adults. Thoughts swirled in my head as kids hid in plain view, turning their backs to the one being pointed at. Others dropped off the slow-spinning merry-go-round. Rules spread out and engaged children within hearing distance. They dropped where they stood with arms over heads. I remembered the face of a boy I hadn't thought of in 10 years. I felt a familiar twitch, but I couldn't quite … I couldn't quite put a word to it … I didn't know what to say, and …

Malcolm. The "professor."

He appeared in the front window of a house across the street. Slowly he pulled off a pair of headphones. The game continued to unfold. He left the window and came out the front door. I should cross the lawn, I thought, confront him before he came onto school property. But I remained fixed, as static an observer as a video camera left running on a tripod.

Malcolm walked onto the playground and entered the game. He joined, like any number of joiners, he crouched down, hiding in the open, keeping his mouth from being seen. The kids didn't seem to care.

I heard my name.

Jack …

It came to me across a great chasm. *"Jack!"* The voice had an electronic, echoing quality and I turned to see Olson standing by the window of his office, mike in hand. He was speaking over the P.A. system, and the words started to filter into my head. "There's a trespasser, Jack! Can't you see him?! Do something, don't just stand there!" I broke from where I stood, and as I walked I lost consciousness of the game—or perhaps it was like trying to see a cloud by moving into it, too insubstantial to be viewed at close range—or maybe it actually broke up as the kids saw me coming. They started to rise from their crouched positions, but Malcolm remained curled.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked when I got to him. "Who are you?"

He lifted his head to look at me. "An admirer," he said. "Only an admirer."

"Of what?"

Conitinued on page 94

NEW THIS MONTH FROM ASPECT

Dark magic, great bravery, and unimaginable danger await two young fugitives in the first novel of a stunning new trilogy from J.V. Jones.

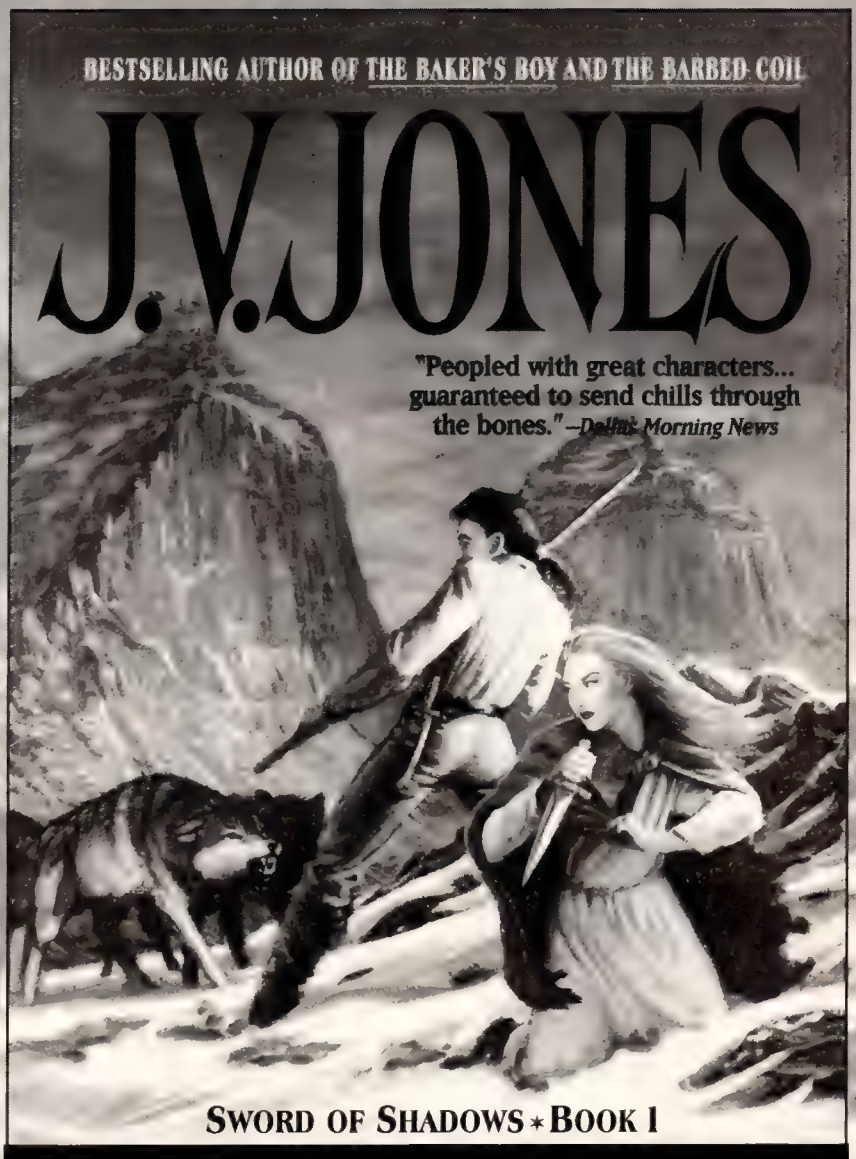
"Filled with great characters...strings out the suspense right up until the very last word."
—Des Moines Sunday Register

"Imaginative and vivid." *—Kirkus Reviews*

"Dark sorcery, adventure and peril...a sparkling first volume in this new trilogy."
—The Pilot (Southern Pines, N. C.)

"Tough, incisive, character driven."
—Locus

"A solid choice for fantasy collections."
—Library Journal


BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE BAKER'S BOY AND THE BARBED COIL
J.V.JONES
"Peopled with great characters... guaranteed to send chills through the bones."—Dallas Morning News
SWORD OF SHADOWS • BOOK I
A CAVERN OF BLACK ICE

AVAILABLE IN PAPERBACK WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

ASPECT
WHERE IMAGINATION KNOWS NO BOUNDS

Visit our Web site at www.twbookmark.com

©2000 TIME WARNER TRADE PUBLISHING, INC THE ASPECT NAME AND LOGO ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF TIME WARNER TRADE PUBLISHING INC

Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out.

—Oscar Wilde

JUDGMENT DAY

I love that quote, even though I think it's nonsense. Wilde was an interesting man. He didn't know me, but then recognizing God doesn't seem to have much to do with personality. For proof, take the rather nervous fellow in front of me right now. He doesn't look too bright, as men go. Yet he is the one, the only one this generation, who knows God when he sees him.

Others say my name several times a day, but that's not the same thing. Others follow older or newer rituals, and that's not the same thing, either. This one just *knows*. Frankly, I don't understand how that works. Sure, I understand a great deal and said so in the appropriate places but then it got exaggerated, as it always does. I don't know everything. Wish I did.

I'm still waiting. Odd. We're on top of a cold, bleak mountain, somewhere in the middle of the world. He knew I'd be here, and so I was. He gets to ask me one question. He came all this way, icicles hanging off his beard, and he's *still* thinking about it.

As I said, not too bright. Not for me to question that part, really. I only get one or two true worshipers as a rule, per generation. There was that one time, near the turn of the 20th century, when there were five. Hasn't happened before or since. I wait patiently, because that's what I do, but a mind as vast and restless as mine can't help but wander.

BY RICHARD PARKS | ILLUSTRATION BY CHARLES DEMORAT

In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. The Earth was without form and void, and darkness moved upon the face of the waters …

Not bad. Oh, a little ponderous, perhaps, but not without style, even after so many translations. I race back along the Temporal River, take a look at myself then, at the beginning of it all. I was young in those days, and the whole project was just getting started. My very own cosmos. I was a little full of myself, to state a self-evident fact. Ask Job. Or those two confused kids, Adam and Eve. "Because I'm the Father"? I may have said it differently, but that's what it meant. Was that really the best I could do? Oh, well. My fault entirely, what happened, but I wouldn't admit that at the time. Or now, unless someone asks. And they won't. They never have.

It's been a long time, and time is the problem. It's running out for this place; I can feel it. I don't know how much longer I've got to

YOU CAN TEACH YOUR CHILDREN; YOU

make it work, but at least I had the sense to get the stories in place as quickly as I could. Wasn't there something George Bernard Shaw said about how religion needs storytellers? That was one of the few things I got right from the Beginning. Pity Shaw didn't know me. He would have asked a good question; I know it. Perhaps another one I couldn't answer.

"You're God, aren't you?"

I don't reply. The silly thing only gets one question and I'm not going to let the fact that he's an idiot ruin it for both of us. I wait. The glowing orb of light that is me is blinding. I tone it down a bit.

He shields his eyes, despite the heavy goggles. Beyond him I can see the mountain guides making camp. They won't see what he sees, or hear. They think he's talking to himself, nuts. Maybe he is. I look in on Adam and Eve again, even though it's water down the Temporal River. I can see it, but I can't change it. There are limits.

Eve has a puppy. I didn't remember the puppy. It's licking her face and she's rolling on the grass, laughing. Such joy. How could I forget that?

"Umm … the thing I really want to know…."

Back to the here and now, as if there were anything at all real except for the moment that rests on the fulcrum between past and future. The future shrinks and the past grows until there's no more future and the balance fails. Judgment Day. Then what? Wish I knew. Let someone ask me that one.

"Why is there suffering?" he asked, and then stood very proud and still.

I don't smile at him. He doesn't expect it. I want to kick his ass but he wouldn't expect that, either. Not proper behavior for a deity. A lightning bolt would be more proper, but the sad truth is you don't spank a child for being a child, no matter what some people think. And we both have so little time.

BECAUSE CREATION MUST BE IN BALANCE. UP AND DOWN, TRUE AND FALSE, SUFFERING AND JOY. WITHOUT ONE, THERE CANNOT BE THE OTHER.

"Well, couldn't we … you know, vote on which we'd like?"

Silence from then on, and the golden ball of light winked out. He should consider himself lucky—he got his answer and nothing else. It's not the right one, but it was one he could understand and, perhaps, profit by. He won't, more than likely. It's a stupid question. More so because I don't really know the answer. I will one day, perhaps; I have reason to hope. He wants to understand the purpose and meaning of suffering? Try having children like him.

Like all of them.

I'VE BEEN A BAD PARENT. Sooner or later the Shining Ones will come to tell me. I remember when they came to me that first time, but not much before that. Where I was, who I was, all gone. I can't ride the Temporal River back that far, though I've tried. All I've got is memory, clear and strong even now, but not real. Maybe I don't remember it the way it happened. The advantage of the time stream is that you *always* know what happened. You don't always know why, but that's a different question.

They pointed to this Earth. This is Yours to shepherd, they said, until the end of time. There are many souls adrift in the void, crying out. Bring them here, clothe your children in flesh, and care for them until that time.

What then, I asked?

Judgment Day.

The words frighten me, because I know what the Shining Ones will do if I've failed. Not to me. My children. The seeds I grew and have tended.

I make mistakes. God should not make mistakes, but I do no matter how hard I try. I'm not perfect, though the children say I am. They don't know. I do. Just look around. Wars over what food to eat, whose father killed whose uncle a thousand years before? Lives like mayflies, and they can remember a thousand-years-old wrong as if it happened to *them*. Vicious little bastards.

Only they aren't, and I know it. Their lineage is plain enough. I can rebuke them and have. I can try, often futilely, to guide them. The one thing I can never do is deny them, or stop loving them. Sometimes I think gods as a group are the most limited beings in the universe. That Free Will thing, for instance. I don't have it. I do what my nature requires me to do.

I still get it wrong.

It isn't fair. Is that what I should have told that silly twit? Life isn't fair? It's true but it's not enough, and it wouldn't have helped him. Or me, come to that.

There's a war. A big one this time. It turns on the fulcrum and there's nothing I can do. Free Will binds me as it frees them. Time to sail upstream. I can't be here now. I used to stay, but I can't do that anymore. It hurts too much.

I'M WALKING WITH ADAM IN THE GARDEN. He looks so somber in the presence of his God. It's not just respect. It's also that sense of duty that kept him in line before a line even existed. He should have taken a cue from Eve sooner. That girl had her priorities right, whatever faults she had. We're being serious in the garden and she's off swimming, or playing chase with the lions for the joy of it, or lying naked under the Sun. Adam's walking and having conversation with *me*.

Dear boy that he was, he could be such a *yutz*.

"Lord, why is there suffering?"

It's the oldest question, after all. Even before they *knew* suffering. Adam at least had the distinction of being first. So I told him the truth as I understood it then. He always asks, and I always tell it the same way. The answer has changed time and again, but not this one. Nothing can change here, where it all started to go wrong.

I don't know why I come here now, except that it feels good to walk in the garden in the pleasant cool of evening, good to see them both again and say the words and make the same mistakes, all the ones I made for love of them, my first born of the souls who called to me out of the darkness..I can't stay. Soon it's time to go. Then it's past time.

When I return to the Here and Now it's a different Here and Now. I tarried too long. The river raced ahead of me for a bit, and I have no choice but to catch it.

The world still turns, blue and green and white, and that's a relief. How long? I seek the answer and find it quickly enough: three hun-

dred years and change. There were people born knowing me who never saw me. That's not fair either, but it can't be helped now. I have to act on the fulcrum of past and present just as they do, for only there is new action allowed. I can't make it up to them. I can't fix it. Once a tree falls it's always fallen, forever and ever. I can't put it back any more than they can.

There's one still alive who knows me. A very old woman, very soon to die. She knows, as she must, and she comes to find me. I go to where I must be found, for that is the Law, and I wait for her.

She seeks me in a synagogue, and I am there when she hobbles in on her cane, alone and lonely. No burning bush or orb of light this time. Haven't the stomach for it now. I sit, just one more old man on a bench. I feel ashamed. Someone get your mind around that one and then tell me how you'd fix the world. Go ahead; I'll wait.

CAN'T DO THEIR LIVING FOR THEM.

The old woman sits down next to me. "So," she says. "Where have you been?"

It's not an accusation, though perhaps it should be. It is simply her question, so I answer it. She digests this in silence. I could leave now. I usually do. Not this time.

"It must be difficult," she said. "For you."

It's not a question, and what I offer her is not an answer, yet it's all I have left to give.

I'M SO SORRY.

She reaches up, touches my cheek. I didn't know if that was allowed or possible; funny that I never tried to find out.

"It's all right," she says. She doesn't say anything else. Soon I know why; she's died there on the bench beside me. She just put her head down on her chest and left the world behind. Well, she was tired. She waited a long time, in human terms. I hope it was worth it.

Another century. Those who taught in my name still do. Those who recite the words still recite the words, and talk to something that is their idea of me. I listen anyway, but they have no questions, just demands. I cannot answer those. I still do what I can. That's all I've ever done. You can teach your children; you can't do their living for them.

Judgment Day is coming. Soon now. Very soon.

I can't stop it, and I'm afraid. I know what it means. They do not. The right hand and the left will be gathered, but John got the rest of it wrong. There will be no separating them; if one fails they *all* fail. That was the deal, the way the Shining Ones explained all those years ago. "We cannot leave one. We will take all, or all will remain."

The world will be destroyed utterly, but that's not the worst part—I'll have to be the one to do it. The Flood was nothing compared to this. No Noah this time, and no hope for a second chance. None will be spared. I will scatter their souls into the void where I found them.

All my children, by my own hand.

I don't know what happens then. Maybe I'll start over, but I don't think so. I think it will destroy me, too. I'm not sure I'll care if it does. I have the past, and the Here and Now, but the future is as closed to me as to anyone. I wonder, now and again, but the Temporal River does not flow so far. At least not when it's carrying me.

Another hundred years. The world still exists. No nuclear exchanges. I'm surprised, but not relieved. There's so much that could still happen. Much of it does: war, famine, fear. Small stuff mostly. Are they getting wiser, finally? I can't be sure. I wish I had more time, but I know there is no more time. I've slammed up against the future, born on the fulcrum moment, and this time the balance does not turn. I'm hanging there when the summons comes.

It's the last, I think. Someone's coming with a question. I meet him in a city slum. His home, if a street can be a home. We're there alone. There's no one in the city, no gravcars moving on the streets, no streaks of atmospheric craft above, no points of light in the cold dark except the stars and planets. A yellowed piece of paper travels down the street, blown on the wind, but no people. I know that's wrong, and I know why it is this way.

We're all out of time.

His eyes are clouded. "Why am I alone?" he asks, in the shadow of a burned-out building.

BECAUSE IT'S JUDGMENT DAY.

It's done. It's said. No taking it back now, no changing a moment that has passed. He's vanished, like the others. Now I am the one who is alone. Time to sit down in the big white chair and do what I have to do.

Not yet.

I know it's wrong, but I don't care. I sail back to the garden one last time. Eden is there, as I remember. The children are not. I visit all my favorite places but they are empty. I don't understand how this can be. I sail back down the time stream with the current until it reaches the future, and there it stops.

The angels are there. I haven't had much for them to do lately, but they don't mind. Aspects of my Will, they await that will with a patience even I admire. They stand behind my Seat as they must, majestic wings folded. I ascend the throne, as *I* must, and I sit.

Oh. So *that's* where you all went off to.

The children are here waiting for me. Every one of them. Row on row of vast multitudes, spread so far even I have trouble seeing all of them. All standing perfectly still, looking at me. I want to tell them how sorry I am, that I did my best, that I did love them all, but now the words won't come. It's too late.

I recognize every one of them. There's the silly man who asked about suffering. There's the wise woman who asked about me. There's the homeless man in the slum, who looks different to me now though I can't say how. It takes a moment; sometimes I'm a little slow.

Ah, now I see it: He's glowing. The woman is glowing too, as is the yutz. He doesn't look much like a yutz now, but I guess he never really did. He's beautiful. They all are. Those three separate from the rest and stand before me like three small people-shaped stars.

I KNOW YOU, I say.

They smile at me. YES. BUT DO YOU KNOW THE QUESTION?

I damn well should. Maybe it's right, maybe it's wrong. Maybe it's as stupid as I think it is, but I don't care. I ask, because it's the one thing I really do want to know.

WHY WAS THERE SUFFERING?

It's the old woman who answers, in her human voice. "How else could you learn?"

Of course. All this time I thought Judgment Day was about the children. Silly me.

Now the children are all removing their tattered clothing of flesh and putting on shining raiment, every one ... no, not the clothes. It's the children who shine. I didn't understand. It's them. It's always been them. The Shining Ones.

ALL THIS BOTHER ... FOR ME?

No answer. One question only; that's the Law. It's all right. The time for questions is past. They are not children, and now neither am I. They said they could not leave anyone behind. Now I understand what that meant. Now it's time to change, time to grow. Time to go. I take their hands in mine, all my brothers and sisters.

I shine. ❧

Prepare to enter a world beyond

The Art of

"I generally either blow it totally in the first 10 minutes and have to start again, or I'm fine." John Howe tends to be philosophic about his work, perhaps because when he doesn't "blow it," he produces pictures that transport us to worlds beyond our wildest imaginings.

Icy mist swirls between towering crags shrouded in blue-shadowed snow. The purple-tinted sky is illuminated with a sudden orange burst of flame erupting from a perilous peak. As the author who described this scene wrote: "Those that looked up from afar thought that the mountain was crowned with storm." Thunder, lightning, tongues of fire; and, half-obscured by cloud and the shifting haziness of a great heat: two figures—a monstrous creature, its wings spread wide, its tail curled around the mountaintop; and, silhouetted in the white-hot blaze that is the beast's breath, a man wielding a tiny sword that shimmers in the conflagration with a searing whiteness.

By Brian Sibley

your imagination.

John Howe

ABOVE: Winter Warriors, *in a swirling cloud of fire and ice, battle unknown enemies.* INSET: *This cover for Janice Kay Johnston's book shows a raven keeping watch on an ancient totem.*

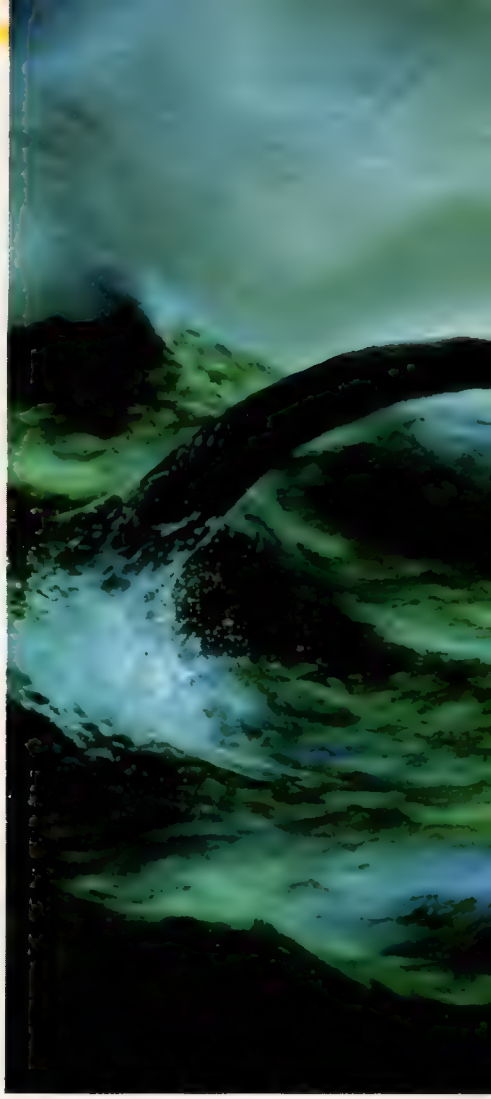
It is a classic John Howe picture, a transitory moment, plucked from a dense, complex text (in this instance, the battle between Gandalf and the Balrog in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*) and rendered into powerful, haunting imagery.

The artist candidly admits that Fantasy literature is not the genre he most prefers to read: "It's undoubtedly a question of taste. I tend to stick either to nonfiction or departure-terminal books. But, in terms of my art, Fantasy literature, with its visual richness, offers great potential to the illustrator. Visually, it is the most stimulating—though Science Fiction runs a close second."

Now living in Switzerland, John Howe was born in Vancouver, BC, in 1957. His early years were, in a sense, unsettled: He grew up on various ranches and farms north of the American border, going where his family went, and repeatedly changing schools.

His memories of his childhood tend to be self-deprecating: describing himself as a skinny, short-sighted kid who lacked most of those attributes considered essential to surviving in school.

His passion was for drawing but, being frequently on the move and so often a newcomer at school, John seldom got a chance to display his talent. Whenever he arrived at a new school he invariably found the art class already oversubscribed. As a result John spent too many unhappy, unprofitable hours studying such things as typing and power mechanics, instead of being able to pursue the subject he loved.



Look at any of John's illustrations—for example, the cover for Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Wandering Fire*, showing a diminutive galleon being tossed to and fro on a bilious sea churned to a maelstrom by the rearing and plunging of a huge sea-serpent, whose scaly length writhes among the foam-flecked waves—and it seems bizarre that a skill that must have been at least foreshadowed in his youth went unrecognized.

At home, however, the young John Howe was always drawing—and reading. "When you're that age," he recalls, "you have 'real' literature rammed down your throat at school, but I can't honestly say it left an indelible imprint on me!" It was writers such as H.P. Lovecraft, Robert Howard, and Tolkien who supplied what he now calls "the iconographic well" from which he drew water.

"I recall reading *The Hobbit* when I was really young, although the only part of the book that I can clearly remember reading was the opening chapter, An Unexpected Party. Other Fantasy books came a bit later. My Dad was a huge fan of Westerns and history books, so I read all those too, anywhere up to eight or ten books a month. I'd read *Conan*, and everything by Edgar Rice Burroughs, by the time I was 13."

ABOVE: A Diversity of Dragons, *the cover for an Anne McCaffrey book, shows Lancelot and the dragon he kills.* OPPOSITE TOP: *A sea-serpent takes hold of a ship in* The Wandering Fire, *Volume II of the Fionavar Tapestries, illustrating the element of water.* OPPOSITE BELOW: The Darkest Road, *Volume II of the Fionavar Tapestries representing fire, shows creatures from Hell being repelled by a knight on a white horse.*

Whether the books were about Western sharp-shooters or mythical warriors, they all had their appeal to a young, fertile imagination: not just for their incident-crowded texts, but for their dramatic covers.

John recalls spending his free time "rooting about in used book shops looking for Frank Frazetta covers!" Like many other aspiring artists growing up in the 'sixties, those were the books that caught the eye and sent the pulse racing! Frazetta's virile, muscular heroes and heroines rushing through exotic jungles, leaping over alien landscapes illuminated by bloodshot moons, brandishing lightning weapons, grappling with prehistoric creatures and monstrous mutants with red eyes and saliva-dripping fangs!

As a child, John spent hours with his box of oil pastels, slavishly copying Frazetta pictures. And, although he no longer needs to borrow from another artists' visions, every now and again his pictures show what might be called "a touch of the Frazettas"—especially in his daring use of dramatic colors: cobalt skies, swirling clouds of orange-flame providing an apocalyptic backdrop for some cataclysmic event such as an airborne confrontation between flying galleys in white, gold, and the palest of lilac and sinister, bat-winged enemy ships in black, brown, and bronze.

As a child, apart from Frazetta, John responded to a diversity of influences from Gustav Dore to the Brothers Hildebrandt. His tastes today are just as diverse. Ask him which Fantasy artists he admires and he will reel off an eclectic list that includes—not, he stresses, in order of preference—Jeff Jones, Phil Hale, Alan Lee, Cadelo, Brom, Moebius, H.R. Giger, William Stout, and a good half-dozen more. Also on the list are a legion of past masters from the realms of Fantasy such as (and I pick at random) Rackham, Dulac, Wyeth, Pyle, Heath Robinson, Heinrich Kley, Richard Dadd, Guadi, Klimt, Waterhouse, "naturally all the pre-Raphaelites," Khnopff, Boeklin, Lecomte du Nouy, and "tons more!"

Despite his wide-ranging admiration for other artists, John has always striven for originality, seeking to establish a style of his own, rather than aping that of others.

"I really don't enjoy criticizing other illustrators' work," he says, "but I really think many American illustrators are illustrating something else entirely, or some aspect of the books that seems foreign to me. So much Fantasy illustration is either neighbors dressed in sheets, or the same mediocre visuals largely pulled from the movies. This incestuous, feeding off other mediocre images even comes through in texts. How many times have I read that in

ABOVE: Celtic Myth, *originally painted for a book, depicts a mythical island with legendary entities staring out to sea.* OPPOSITE: *This illustration is from a protagonist's sketchbook in a McCaffrey novel.* BOTTOM LEFT: *This whimsical painting is for the cover of* Memory and Dream, *a novel by Charles de Lint.* BOTTOM RIGHT: *A Celtic warrior stands guard by an oak tree, oblivious to the threat of a ghostly bear in David Gemmel's* Sword in the Storm.

"I used to could save

the Middle Ages, no one knew how to make left or right shoes? That a flintlock was 10 times faster to fire than a matchlock? How many heroes are dressed in 'trews,' carry their swords on 'baldrics,' and wear the most unimaginative costume, straight out of the worst that the cinema has to offer? It's awful! It's annoying! It has no depth and suffers from poor design and misunderstood reference material."

But does it really matter? After all, it's only popular fiction. "Of course it doesn't 'really matter'—not in the way fresh milk for kids matters; but all this striving for mediocrity really is a little tiresome!"

In 1977, after an undistinguished academic year at an American college near Strasbourg, France, John went to the nearby Ecole des Arts Decoratifs and, at the end of three years, had a presentable portfolio and a belief that he knew what he wanted to do with his life.

Moving to Switzerland, John worked on an animated film before beginning what is now a highly successful career as an illustrator of calendars, posters, books, and book jackets. Jackets like that made in 1994 for Janice Kay Johnson's *Winter of the Raven.*

A forest glade, persistent driving rain glistening on the dark foliage of the sombre fir trees and the tangled undergrowth of briers and brambles. In the foreground another forest: ancient totems, weather-scarred and moss-furred, carved with beast and bird. This way and that way they lean, staring into the misty distance with their wide, blind eyes; warding off unwary travelers with their menacing rictus grins. And, perched on the arching wooden beak of a carved bird, a living raven, his black back hunched against the elements, a sheen of rain on his feathers, a

think painstakingly applying detail anything, but it only makes it worse."

glint of gray light catching his unblinking gimlet eye. So many of the books John has provided jackets for are huge volumes, running to several hundred pages. One can't help but wonder if he *really* reads the entire book before making his illustration.

"Well, OK, I *nearly* always read the whole book. There are times when the picture comes easily, others where it is a struggle. Some writers are visual, some just aren't. The less original the author, the harder it is to find an image and there are times when I find myself wishing I had a stronger set of visual references. There are some illustrators who are identifiable no matter what the book, but I always feel that if there's not an image there, I just can't barge in and impose myself."

When the images *are* there in the writing, the illustration rings with a note of authenticity. Consider another cover, this time for Guy Gavriel Kay's *A Song for Arbonne*.

The sun is rising behind a castle on a distant crag, touching far-off mountains with a pale purple iridescence, flooding a pastoral landscape of fields and olive trees with golden light and giving a glowing luminosity to the broken, weed-festooned masonry of a once-triumphal arch. The whole scene, viewed from the air, is a literal flight of fancy.

So how does John choose one image, a single scene to represent a big, fat volume, crammed with all manner of fantastical stuff?

"The fatter the book, the more often the editor will have an idea already. It also depends on the style of the book and the collection. I wish sometimes it was possible to pick less commercial themes, but you can and must judge a book initially by its cover...."

And—as with Guy Gavriel Kay's trilogy, *The Fionavar Tapestry*—a book jacket may be

the first of a number all needing to have an identifiably generic "look." John explains: "Since every book these days seems to be part of a series, it is essential that the first volume establish the atmosphere or a main character; you may then have more freedom when you get to later volumes."

John's covers for the three volumes of *The Fionavar Tapestry* carry images that suggest the elements of "earth," "water," and "fire" (John was keeping "air" for a slip-case if the books were ever boxed as a set) and have respectively green, blue, and red as their predominant color. So, does he often use specific color tones or stylistic devices when depicting the work of a particular writer?

"Not consciously, although I am sure it happens. I really do feel at the mercy of the text, if there's nothing in the book that captures my interest, I'm in trouble. However, people keep telling me they are surprised by changes of style, which in turn is a surprise to me!"

Certainly, John's choice of materials has changed through the years. His early work used a lot of acrylic, gave way to water colors, ink and crayon which, while being a more demanding combination of media to work with, nevertheless enables him to achieve a luminosity not easily created with acrylics.

In 1996, John made a cover painting for a book on Celtic mythology that was never published. That painting is a masterpiece of luminosity. The foreground is dominated by a great tree, its overarching branches forming a part-proscenium for a backcloth painted with an infinitely receding gray-green landscape of standing stones, ruined turrets, soaring towers, and precipitous cliffs that fall sheer to a sliver-gray sea. In the dappled shade of the tree, a knight in armor, a golden-haired maiden with a unicorn, a white-bearded wizard with a pair of raven familiars are all gazing seaward. Warriors rest on spear and battle axe, fairies flutter in the watery-golden light, swans glide, and a white stag stands alone on a hillside.

Celtic Myth is one of many John Howe pictures in which landscapes are seen as we so often see them in our world: vague, uncertain, concealed by rain and mist or a blaze of sunlight.

Landscapes such as Tolkien described in *The Lord of the Rings*. In one of John's most popular illustrations—so loved that he is constantly asked for permission to reproduce it and so desired by fans that, a few years ago, a particularly ardent admirer stole the original—the artist depicts Gandalf the wizard striding resolutely along through a Middle Earth that is simultaneously sluiced in rain and bathed in sunlight.

John's association with the books of J.R.R. Tolkien goes back to his early reading. "I read *The Two Towers*, the second volume of *The Lord of the Rings*, first! I then read the third volume, *The Return of the King* and, finally, the one I should have started with—*The Fellowship of the Ring*! Can you believe that? It must have seriously inhibited my comprehension of the plot! I got them from the library (no question of buying books to read in those days) and I imagine most readers took out *The Fellowship*,

Continued on page 96

Spirit Stone

Life is hard in the desert. A woman needs all the help she can get.

BY NAOMI KRITZER

Illustration by Steven Adler

SARAI RECEIVED THE NECKLACE AS A BRIDE-GIFT. Laran's other wives muttered about that—Sarai was only 14 years old, plain of face and narrow-hipped. If she conceived a child, she was as like as not to die in the birthing. But Sarai had been the protégé of Inka, her old clan's midwife, and her small hands were said to be able to turn the most difficult breech birth and stanch the worst bleeding. Laran had leaped at the opportunity to take her to wife, and counted her cheap at twice the cost.

Sarai was enchanted with the necklace. It was made of linked metal chain, rather than cord; even if it broke, it could be easily mended and no beads would be lost. Held up as a single loop, it was almost as long as she was tall, with glittering cut crystals making up most of the length. Occasionally they alternated with beads made of polished wood. Most fascinating of all was the bead made of spirit-stone—a single, grayish-green bead of polished rock, homely until you looked at the right angle and saw the shifting, translucent blue running inside. Sarai remembered being told that spirit-stones brought bad luck, but she shrugged that aside—they were rare and valuable, and this necklace was a token of Laran's esteem for her. She spent most of the wedding ceremony studying the shifting color, and had to be prompted to speak when it was her turn to give consent to the marriage.

Sarai did look up, hesitantly, when it was time for Laran's 14 other wives to give their consent. Their faces were veiled, because of the presence of Sarai's uncle, and it was difficult to read their expressions, but Laran's first wife made no secret of her feelings. Kara glowered at Sarai over her veil, and her voice was bitter. Most of the other wives seemed resigned; one or two even seemed pleased.

Several of the wives were pregnant. Laran's 14th wife, Merel, was very pregnant; according to Inka, it was her first pregnancy. Sarai scrutinized Merel's posture and tried to guess if she was carrying a son or a daughter. It was difficult to tell without touching her belly, and seeing her standing up.

When all the gifts had been exchanged, Sarai followed Laran's other wives to his tent, pitched just beside the tents of Sarai's own clan. Once the tent flaps were down, the women shed their veils and crowded around Sarai, examining her like a camel. Elia, one of the pregnant wives, stroked her hair; another peered at her teeth.

Kara shouldered the others out of the way. She was a tall woman, with buckteeth and a long chin. She looked Sarai over and pinched the flesh of her upper arm to see how fat she was. "I'll bet my amber earrings that she's barren," she announced to no one in particular. Sarai held herself still, knowing that any reaction would only encourage Kara.

"Look at you," Kara said. "You look like a spider, you're so skinny. Doesn't your clan feed you?"

Sarai stared down at the ground, not answering.

"Well," Kara said, and her voice was now sticky sweet, "at least Laran won't starve you. Even when you get old, I'm sure you'll be taken care of. Everyone pities a barren woman." She sauntered away, giving Sarai a last gloating smile over her shoulder.

The tent was arranged for the wedding feast; Sarai took her seat in the place of honor. Sarai's girl cousins brought in roasted lamb on huge platters, with fried chickpea crackers to scoop it up with; they served first Sarai, then Kara, then the rest of the wives. The food was excellent, but under Kara's withering smirk, Sarai barely tasted it. Her dry mouth made her thirsty; at least the other wives poured her plenty of sweet wine, encouraging her to drink as much as she liked.

Late in the evening, Sarai heard a drum struck three times. Laran's other wives hastily veiled themselves; a few moments later, Sarai's uncle came in. Mirel and Elia solemnly swathed Sarai in a veil, then pushed her gently toward her uncle. Sarai stumbled over the edge of her own robe, she was so tipsy, and everyone laughed. "Let's go, little bride," her uncle said, and took her by the arm to help her. He led her to a small tent that had been pitched some distance away from the others. Then he kissed her solemnly on the forehead and waited as she went into the tent.

Laran was already there, stretched out across the pile of cushions and sheets. Sarai sat down ungracefully beside him; her head was spinning from all the wine. In the lamplight, now, she had her first good look at Laran. He looked kind enough, but old; rather like her uncle. He was staring down at his hands, and she wondered if she was supposed to do something, or if he would.

It was Laran who broke the silence. "Good night, little one," he said, and kissed her on her forehead just as her uncle had. Then he lay down on his side and went to sleep.

Sarai lay down next to him, a bit puzzled. She hadn't been sure what to expect, but it had been something … more. Then she closed her eyes for a moment, and the wine and her exhaustion swallowed her into dreamless sleep.

KARA WOKE SARAI AT DAYBREAK; LARAN WAS NOWHERE TO BE seen. "Rise and greet the morning, little spider," Kara said. As Sarai sat up blearily, Kara drew back in mock-apology. "Oh, I'm so terribly sorry. Does your head hurt? All that wine, and for *nothing*, too."

Sarai closed her eyes for a moment; her head *did* hurt.

"None of that," Kara said. "It's time to get up even if you do have a hangover. You've packed your things, haven't you? We're getting ready to leave."

Sarai had, of course, packed her possessions. Kara trailed after her as Sarai fetched them. "Is that all you have?" she asked. "They really *don't* like you very much here, do they?"

If I'd had more, she'd have told me I was loading the camels down too much, Sarai thought.

"Do you have a tongue, little spider? I don't think I've heard you say a word yet."

Sarai dragged her eyes up to meet Kara's spiteful glare. "I have a tongue."

"Oh, good. It wouldn't matter if Mirel lacked a tongue—Laran married her for her face, not her witty conversation—but midwives sometimes need to talk. To say things like 'push' or 'almost there,' you know."

Sarai stared down again, this time at her necklace. The spirit-stone rested just over her diaphragm. It was at just the right angle to see the blue translucence. As she stared into the stone, she thought she saw—for a heartbeat—eyes, looking back at her.

"—listening to me, spider?"

Startled, Sarai looked up.

"Are midwives in your clan traditionally half-wits, or are you special?" Kara asked. "Let's go. It's time to load the camels."

Sarai tied her bundle to the camel Kara pointed at, then untied it and retied it to the new camel when Kara changed her mind. Sarai spared a last glance back at her old home as Laran's clan mounted their camels. Kara's lips twisted in disdain at that, and Sarai knew that she'd just given Kara more to torment her with.

The caravan moved slowly; Sarai closed her eyes against the desert brightness. She felt as knotted inside as a tangled thread; to calm herself, she softly crooned the song that Inka sang to laboring mothers. She rolled the bead of spirit-stone gently in her fingers; it was cool at first, but warmed slowly as she touched it.

Then—

What service do you require?

Sarai stiffened and looked behind her so wildly that she almost fell off her camel. Even as she twisted in her seat, though, she knew that she wasn't hearing this voice with her ears.

What, she thought. *Who…?*

I am the spirit of the spell-chain. The voice paused. Then: *Yours to command.*

The spell-chain. *You mean the necklace?*

That chain of attractive rocks that's looped around your neck—yes.

I don't understand, Sarai thought.

There was a sigh, or something very much like it. Then she felt a strange queasy dizziness, and a tickling in the back of her skull.

I see you're aware of the Khelsar-Renet war, though your people simply call it "The War of the Mages."

Sarai had never heard the names, but of course she'd heard of the war. *The war that destroyed the cities.*

This spell-chain was left at the end of the war, unused. Someone must have picked it up, and it's been passed around as jewelry ever since.

Sarai finally gathered her wits enough to ask a question. *What do you mean, spell-chain?*

Mages draw their powers from wind spirits, which they trap in what you call spirit-stones. The voice paused, as if to reflect for a moment. *Or rather, mages used to trap wind spirits in spirit-stones. The spell-chain shapes my power, making it easily controllable. Easy enough that even a tribal midwife can use my power.* The voice paused, and again, Sarai felt the tickling in her skull. Then: *I see that you've wanted power before. Now you have it. What do you want to do with it?*

Sarai stared into the spirit-stone again. *If you've been in this necklace since the cities burned—why hasn't someone else used your power?*

You were the first mage to carry me since the cities fell, the spirit said.

Sarai wondered what the spirit could possibly mean. *But I'm not a mage.*

There was a sharp sigh, as irritable-sounding as Kara. *That much is clear, but nonetheless, you know a novice spell, and so I was able to make contact.* The spirit hummed something in her head; after a moment, Sarai realized that it was Inka's song.

That's not a spell, Sarai said, *that's just a song we sing to calm women in labor.*

If that's all it is, then you waste your talents, the spirit said. *Regardless, you can hear me, and I can hear you. That's all that is necessary for you to use my powers. Ask, and I will do your bidding. Anything.*

Sarai saw Kara looking at her with narrowed eyes, and hid her smile in her scarf.

Would you like to lead this clan? the spirit asked.

Sarai looked around at the caravan, each person robed heavily against the dry desert air. Kara was ignoring her. Merel sat uncomfortably on her camel, heavy in her late pregnancy. Again, Sarai found herself trying to guess the sex of the child, and reluctantly pulled her mind back to the spirit's question. *What do you mean, lead the clan?*

I can make them do as you bid. I can give you the power of life and death over all of them—including your husband. You will eat the choicest food; you will sit in the place of honor each night; none will dare oppose you.

They will fear me? Me? Sarai asked.

Yes. They will fear you.

Let me think about it, Sarai said.

There was a sense of assent, and the spirit fell silent.

SARAI HAD GROWN UP SURROUNDED BY WHISPERS AND COVERT glances. She understood at an early age that the pity of her family was the only coin she possessed, but not quite why. Her cousins had mothers, who had been brought from various tribes, as well as a father—Sarai's uncle. Sarai herself had only a mother, and after her mother died, she had no one at all. Her mother had been married honorably—one of Sarai's aunts had impressed this upon her—but had been dissatisfied with her husband and had come home to live on her brother's charity.

"Husband?" Inka spat, when Sarai asked her about this. "That camel's ass tried to kill her. Your mother came here when she was pregnant with you, because with the beatings he gave her she was afraid she'd lose you. Don't worry, Sarai. Your uncle is a better man than his father, or yours. He'll find you a good man, not a jackal." Inka herself had been married to Sarai's uncle's father; she was not Sarai's uncle's mother, but was welcomed to the clan for her skill at midwifery.

Sarai nodded, and edged a little closer to Inka. In the years after her mother died, it was a brother she wanted most, not a father. A brother would have defended her from the cousin who tripped her as she was gathering the camel dung, the cousin who threatened to push her into the well, and the cousin who filled her own stomach with food stolen from Sarai.

A brother.

The spirit had been silent for a while, but now it roused itself with a rustled whisper. *You don't need a brother,* it said. *You have me.*

You.

You can have anything you want. Do you want power?

Sarai fingered the necklace of beads gently, watching the sun catch on the facets of crystal. She had been frightened for months after Tanat threatened to push her into the well. She had taken care to fetch water when he was occupied with his own chores. After several months of careful watching she discovered that she was not the only one who feared him. For a while, Tanat had whatever he wanted—the tenderest meat, strongest wine, fastest camel. But he was bitterly disliked by everyone but his own mother—even his sisters hated him. One day the young men went to raid a rival clan, and as always Tanat claimed the fastest camel. Sarai saw the faint smiles as everyone said, He's yours.

When Tanat did not come back from the raid, everyone pretended to be terribly shocked, and desperately sad. "We told him to hold back," the other cousins said sadly. "We told him it would be foolish to ride ahead of us, to attack the other clan all by himself. But you know Tanat. He always liked to be first." Everyone but Tanat's mother had a lighter step for weeks.

I don't want to be feared, Sarai thought.

What do you want?

I'll think about it.

#

THEY REACHED LARAN'S HOME TERRITORY AFTER THREE DAYS OF riding. They met his flocks first, watched by his daughters; a little while later they reached his main camp. His eldest son came out to meet them. When he formally kissed Sarai on both cheeks, she realized that he was older than she was.

The women could take off their veils, now that they were home with only kinsmen to see them. It was Sarai's first opportunity to see the women by daylight. Kara was even less attractive in good light; her buckteeth were mottled brown, and several were missing. Mirel, on the other hand—her long lashes and huge eyes had been visible over her veil, but her flawless skin and perfect bow-shaped lips had not. She was devastatingly beautiful, by far the most beautiful of Laran's wives, and even the slight puffiness of late pregnancy hadn't marred her. She helped to unload the camels, waddling a bit. She's definitely carrying a boy, Sarai thought, studying her.

Mirel turned and beckoned to her. "You'll sleep next to me when you're not with Laran," she said. "I'll show you where."

Laran's wives slept in one big tent, along with most of their children. Mirel slept near the door, and she unrolled Sarai's blankets beside hers. Sarai set her own little bundle down next to her. The other wives came in to put away their own belongings, then went out to help finish unpacking. Mirel sat down on her sleeping rug, picking up Sarai's bundle to help her unpack.

"Kara said that you'd brought very little," Mirel said. "She made it sound like you were coming with the clothes on your back and nothing else!" Mirel spoke lightly, but Sarai felt an odd shame anyway.

> Don't you feel silly, having this sort of power at your hand, and ignoring it? The spirit was yelling in her ears again, and Sairai shook her head.

"Herbs," she said, pointing to her bundle. "I'm a midwife."

"I know," Mirel said. "I was so glad when I heard that Laran was going to marry you—this is my first pregnancy."

"May I?" Sarai asked, reaching toward Mirel's belly.

"Of course," Mirel said.

Sarai slipped her hand under the layers of Mirel's robes, feeling her belly and the baby inside. It wasn't a great big child, which was just as well; Mirel wasn't a big woman. The baby wasn't quite in the right position yet, but it felt like it would probably turn in time. And a boy—Sarai was certain.

"It feels like a fine healthy son," Sarai said with a smile.

Mirel burst into sobs. "I'm so sorry," she gasped after a moment. "You must think I'm crazy—"

"You're no crazier than any other woman pregnant with her first baby," Sarai said, stroking Mirel's hand. She let Mirel cry for a few minutes, then asked, "Were you very worried?"

"Kara dreamed a few months ago that my child was stillborn," Mirel said, when she could speak again.

"Does Kara dream with accuracy often?"

"I don't know," Mirel said. "I've only been Laran's wife for a year and a half."

"Has she had a useful dream in that time?" Sarai asked. Mirel shook her head. "And—please don't take this the wrong way—does she like you?"

"She hates me," Mirel said, with a little laugh.

"Is she the sort of woman who would tell you about that sort of dream just to upset you?"

"Honestly? She's the sort of woman who would make it up completely." Mirel shook her head. "I don't know why I let her worry me so much."

"Well, *I* know what I'm talking about," Sarai said. "Your son will be born healthy and alive."

Mirel wiped her eyes and smiled, clasping Sarai's hand. Mirel was beautiful even with red eyes and a tear-streaked face, and touching her soft hand, Sarai realized with a certainty as cold as the night wind why Laran had treated her on her wedding night as if she were his niece, not his wife. Mirel, his newest and most beautiful wife, was pregnant—and frightened. He had heard that Sarai was a skilled midwife—and so he had asked for her as a wife, because it was the only way he could have her. Yet, like Kara, he thought Sarai too weak to bear children—and so he did not intend to give her any. She had been wed to deliver the children of other women, Sarai realized, looking at Mirel. Not to have sons of her own.

That doesn't have to be true.

The spirit spoke suddenly, so loudly that Sarai had to fight the urge to clamp her hands over her ears. *What do you mean?*

If you want your husband's lust, you can have it. His children—I can ensure your fertility. And that you bear only sons, if you want. Is that what you want, Sarai? I can give that to you.

You can make him love me?

I can make him lie with you. I can make him give you children, whether he wants to or not. The spirit's voice was eager. *Let me give this to you.*

There's no hurry, Sarai thought. *I will think about it.*

Sarai sat up in the darkness of the tent to find Mirel kneeling at her side. "You're not dying, Mirel."

"I think—*oh*." Mirel's face contorted and her hands clenched on Sarai's forearms hard enough to leave bruises. "Sarai—"

"Relax, Mirel," Sarai said, helping Mirel back to her own bed. "You're having your baby. It's all right. I'm right here."

Mirel's teeth chattered as Sarai helped her to lay back down, despite the warmth of the tent. "I think—"

"You're thinking too much," Sarai said. "Women have babies every day. You're going to be fine." She prodded Mirel's belly gently. The child was turned correctly, head down. Mirel's waters hadn't broken yet, and labor had probably only just started. Sarai woke one of the older children. "Make me hot water for tea," she said. "I'd also like some cold water—and bring us something to eat." Even if Mirel wasn't hungry, Sarai would coax her to eat something, and she wanted something for herself to eat, too.

"I'll teach you everything I know," Inka had promised Sarai. "But in the end, each woman has to push out the baby herself."

Sarai gave Mirel tea to strengthen her and her baby. She sang her the song of calming that the spirit had said was a novice spell, and bathed Mirel's face and hands with the cool water as the day grew warm. She tried to make sure that Mirel ate some food, and slept a bit between contractions. And she had the other wives keep Kara well away. "I don't even want her near the tent," Sarai said. "I don't want her having a conversation that Mirel could just 'happen' to overhear. If I have to go to Laran myself to ensure this, I will. Do I have to?" To her surprise, the other woman shook her head vigorously and hurried out. She didn't know where Kara was hustled off to, but there was no sign of her.

You could bring the child out of her like light from a candle if you wanted to, you know, the spirit said.

She's doing just fine. Go away.

Inka didn't lose any women while you were there, but sooner or later, you'll see a really bad birth. Call on my powers, and I can make even a hemorrhage stop.

Don't take the spell-chain off, and no one can take it from you. The only way to break the spell would be if you shattered the spirit-stone.

SARAI'S UNCLE HAD 17 WIVES. FOURTEEN OF HIS WIVES HAD SONS. One had only daughters—six, one right after the other. One was completely barren. And one—Alia—lost her first pregnancy, then bore four children, all of whom died within days of their birth. Yet despite that tragedy, Alia was envied by the other wives. Alia was the favorite.

After the fourth child died, Inka warned Alia that she should bear no more, and Sarai's uncle regretfully ceased to bring her to his bed. Nonetheless, he treated Alia with unfailing tenderness; he never spoke sharply to her, never complained about anything she did. The odd thing was, she wasn't even that pretty. The other wives, except for the barren one, consoled themselves in the children that Alia would never bear. Still, they were jealous: Alia was loved as they were not.

I cannot force that, the spirit admitted. *But what do you need with it? You can have sons to take care of you, or power in your own right.*

Sarai found herself shaking her head. *Not that,* she thought. *Lust but not tenderness; sons, but no kindness from my husband. I don't want that.*

There was a frustrated sound from the spirit, and it fell silent again.

"SARAI, HELP ME. I THINK I'M DYING."

I don't need you to help me deliver a baby. Now be quiet, you're distracting me.

Don't you feel silly, having this sort of power at your hand, and ignoring it? The spirit was yelling in her ears again, and Sarai shook her head.

Do I have to take the necklace off to get you to leave me alone? I'm busy. I'll let you know if I think of something I want you to do.

There was an incoherent grumble and then silence.

In the late afternoon, Sarai knew it was almost time. Mirel raised herself to a squat; Sarai clasped her hands and urged her to push. Mirel nearly crushed Sarai's wrists in her grip. "I can't do this," she gasped between contractions.

"Yes you can," Sarai said. "You're almost there."

Sure enough, the child's head was crowning. Mirel strained again, and the face emerged. Sarai realized that the cord was around the child's neck. She eased Mirel on to her back, lifting the layers of robes over her hips. "I need you to *not* push for a minute," she said.

"What?" Mirel said, her voice squeaking in bafflement.

"Take little breaths," Sarai said. "Like this—" she demonstrated. "I'll tell you when you can push again."

She was already slipping a finger into Mirel, under the cord, pulling it over the child's head. And again—it was looped twice. There.

"Push again," she said, and with one more groan, the child was out.

A boy, but he wasn't breathing. Sarai put her mouth against his and sucked out the mucus, then smacked his little bottom. The baby gasped and started screaming. Mirel raised her head at the sound.

"What did I tell you?" Sarai said, and set the baby on Mirel's stomach while she cut the cord. "A fine, healthy boy."

He was pink now, screaming his head off. "Let him suckle," Sarai said. There would be no milk yet, but for the child to suckle now would help the milk come in, and prevent bleeding. "The hard work's done."

Mirel delivered the afterbirth a little while later; she bled a bit, but no more than usual. Laran came in to see his son; after he left, Mirel and the baby went to sleep. Sarai picked up her cold supper and went outside to eat it. It was night, and the Moon was up. She carried her food to the very edge of the camp, settling down in the sand to stare out into the desert as she ate. Sarai had heard stories about an endless lake of water, stretching to where the land touched the sky, and in the silvery moonlight the desert could almost be that water. She took a bite of food.

I know what you want, the spirit said. Its voice was quiet, as soothing as Sarai talking Mirel through the birth.

What do I want, then?

Freedom, the spirit said. *You don't want to live here, dependent on a husband who doesn't love you—no more than you wanted to live dependent on your uncle who didn't love you. You just don't realize you have any other choice.*

Sarai waited.

There is an ocean beyond the sands—I can take you there. There are places where a skilled midwife is valued in her own right—you could live beholden to no man, charging coin for your skill and supporting yourself.

Sarai was baffled by the idea, but managed to frame one question: *Alone? Who would protect me?*

There was a sigh, a rustle, a hint of a smile. *Who do you need but me?*

What if the spell is broken? What if I lose the chain?

Don't take the spell-chain off, and no one can take it from you. The only way to break the spell would be if you shattered the spirit-stone.

Let me think about this. But Sarai could feel her own longing, and knew that the spirit did as well.

Like a bird in flight, Sarai. Like a wild horse. No one to command you, no one to forbid you. I can give you freedom.

WHEN SARAI WAS FOUR YEARS OLD, SHE WOKE ONE MORNING TO find that her mother was gone. "Sick," one of her aunts told her distractedly, but Sarai knew that wasn't true. She counted her aunts, and they were all outside; if her mother were truly sick, one of them would be inside the tent to nurse her. Instead of keeping the camp quiet to avoid disturbing someone in a fever, there was a flurry of frantic activity. In the late afternoon, all of her older male cousins were sent out on camels, but not in a group, as if for a raid—they rode out in pairs, heading in all directions. They returned at nightfall, and in the morning, they rode out again.

On the fourth day, they brought back her mother's body. Luck alone had led them to her before the sands had buried her forever. Sarai didn't understand until much later that they had brought back the body to show that there was not a mark on her—to prove that no one had murdered her.

When Sarai was eight, one of her aunts told her that her mother had gone looking for her husband. "Your uncle wasn't to her liking, either. She went to beg your father to take her back." But Sarai knew that it was a lie.

Like her mother, Sarai would stand at the edge of her uncle's camp in the evening, staring out to the darkening desert with a keening pain she couldn't describe. She had wished she could fly away like a bird, or even run like a jackal across the desert hills, seeking out water with an animal's instincts. That, of course, was why her mother had died; she had run out of water. No one could cross the desert alone, on foot. Certainly not a woman alone, who could hardly force her way in to take water from known wells. So Sarai had closed her eyes and held out her arms to the wind, and when it failed to carry her away, had returned to her bed.

I can carry you away, the spirit whispered.

Sarai's mother was not the only person ever to run away. Sarai also had an older girl cousin who ran away when Sarai was nine years old—Dalia. Like Sarai's mother, Dalia ran away at night; unlike Sarai's mother, she did not run alone.

Sarai saw her go, and could have stopped her. She had been sitting at the edge of the camp, staring into the dark desert, when she heard a footstep behind her and turned around. Dalia gasped when she saw Sarai. "Sarai, you shouldn't be up."

Sarai blinked at her. Dalia had always been reasonably nice to her, so she wasn't frightened. "Neither should you," she said.

"Sarai, if you'll go inside to bed right now, I'll give you a silver bracelet."

"I'm not tired."

For a minute, Sarai thought Dalia was going to slap her, but then she reconsidered her tactics. "*Please* go inside, Sarai," she said. "It's important."

"I'll go inside if you'll tell me why you want me to so badly," Sarai said.

"You have to *promise* that you'll go inside, and that you'll be quiet and not tell anybody what I'm doing," Dalia said.

"I promise," Sarai said. "On my honor."

"All right, then. Davin of Kilar's clan is going to kidnap me tonight. I need to go out into the desert to wait for him."

Kilar's clan was one of their rival clans. "Why do you want to be kidnapped?" Sarai asked.

"Oh, you're too young to understand. But—Davin and I love each other very much, but Father would never let him marry me. So he'll kidnap me, and then Father will have no choice. He'll be angry, but I don't care—I'll be with Davin. Now go *inside*. You promised."

So Sarai went inside. She did not break her promise to Dalia, and she did not volunteer the information the next day. People figured out quickly enough where Dalia had gone. Sarai's uncle was furious. Davin sent a bride-gift, as was customary for a kidnapper, but it was much less than the bride-price her uncle could have gotten from another man. Mostly, though, he was angry at Dalia for defying him, and worse, for marrying a member of a rival clan. On his orders, the camp mourned Dalia, and pretended that she was dead.

Since Dalia was supposed to be dead, they weren't supposed to repeat gossip they heard about her, though of course everyone did, when Sarai's uncle wasn't listening. Unfortunately, the news wasn't good. Davin treated her badly, then even more badly when she failed to bear a child. The clans ended their feud for trade reasons, and Sarai glimpsed Dalia one day a few years later. Dalia bore no fresh bruises—at least, none that Sarai could see—but Davin's beatings had permanently scarred her face. And although Sarai's uncle had reconciled with Kilar, Dalia could never go home to her father or one of her brothers. She had sought freedom, but instead traded one master for another.

Sarai stared down at the crystals of her necklace, glittering in the moonlight; at the spirit-stone, and the glint of water inside.

Behind her, the camp was quiet; everyone was asleep. Beyond her, the desert beckoned.

Let me give you freedom, the spirit whispered.

"No," Sarai said aloud. "It wouldn't be freedom. I would be free of my husband, free of my uncle—but I would be utterly dependent on you." She began to unwind the necklace from her neck.

Wait, the spirit said, its voice rising.

"I am a midwife," Sarai said. "Inka doesn't live with her husband—she doesn't even live with her son. Any clan is glad to have a midwife. I don't need to depend on *pity*, even if I have no sons."

The spirit was still clamoring in her head. She dropped the necklace to the ground; the voice abruptly ceased.

continued on page 94

SAVING THE SKYCHILDREN

By Mindy L. Klasky Illustration by Robert Crabb

Shea had put too much salt in the soup. She had thought there were still three potatoes left, that they would absorb the extra salt. It was only when she clambered down to the dank root cellar that she learned she was wrong. There were no more potatoes. And there was too much salt.

When Shea called the orphans to sit at the long table, she expected them to complain. After all, her children were still learning to follow the course appointed for them by the skies. They were still striving to live by the stars that had shone over their births. Her skychildren were not perfect.

The five lionchildren, though, stoically raised their bowls of salty water to their cracked lips. They drank like good little soldiers. Five tattoos peered at Shea over their wooden bowls, lion-brown constellations curving beneath each left eye.

The nine sunchildren managed as well, sighing in discontent, but drinking down their supper. Only a few rolled their eyes, wrinkling the rayed tattoos high on their cheeks, symbol of the Sun that had shone over their births.

The flock of owlchildren took the opportunity to discuss the logic of the situation. Should Shea have expected there to be more potatoes? If not, then had she acted properly in preparing the soup? On and on, the owls jabbered at each other, their own tattoos glinting black against their cheeks.

Shea merely watched them and listened, thinking of her own children.

Her own dead lionson, her lost daughter. Her lost swangirl. Like Serena.

Just six years old, the orphaned swangirl Serena was the problem during supper. As usual. She perched at the head of the table and wrinkled her nose at her bowl of tepid brine. One of the sunchildren tried to forestall a tantrum by giving Serena his portion of acorn bread. Serena took one look at the dry crust, and a crystal tear trickled past the silver wings tattooed beneath her left eye.

That tear made Tain, the oldest sungirl, rush over to comfort the swanchild. As Tain crooned soft words, the lion captain, Hartley, glared at the other children. He made a show of mopping out the salty dregs from his bowl with his own bitter bread. The other children followed his example. Shea's heart went out to her oldest orphans, to Tain and Hartley, who were almost ready to take their places in the warring, wild world.

As Tain cleared empty bowls from the table, Shea rested a hand on Hartley's arm. She spoke awkwardly. "Thank you."

"I was only doing my job," the lionboy growled. It still surprised Shea that he spoke with a man's deep voice. He had already lived 15 years. Fifteen years, all in the shadow of Sin Hazar's wars.

"You do your job well. It's a comfort knowing I can trust you."

The boy was clearly pleased by the praise, but before he could answer, Tain approached. "I'll get the children into bed. We should get the suns up early tomorrow, if we're going to forage in the southern clearing."

"Aye," Shea agreed. "It's a long walk."

"I still don't think it's safe," Hartley protested. He had argued every evening since Shea proposed the journey to the distant part of the forest. "My lions can't guard all of us so far from home."

"Well, we can't just sit here and starve," Shea said. She might only be a sun, but she knew about providing for her children. "Besides, it's just the suns and the lions who will go. We'll send the owls and Serena to the village for the day."

"The village isn't safe either! Sin Hazar's men could come through at any time!"

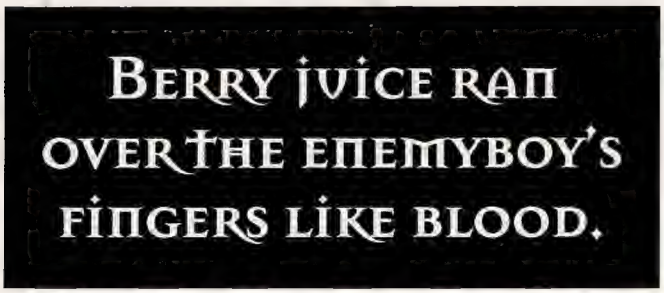
"Sin Hazar's men have not passed this way in over a year. They're staying in the north. They're preparing to do battle across the sea."

"They may fight across the ocean, but they'll come here to gather their soldiers. You know the rumors—you've heard them in the village!"

"If stories had any value, then bards would give feasts all year round."

"Shea, my lions have been talking about nothing else. Everyone knows that King Sin Hazar has decided to gather an army of children."

"An army of children!" Shea forced herself to laugh, as if she had not heard the desperate tales.



"You know he needs us. After 15 years, there are hardly any men left in the country. The Little Army, though, will help Sin Hazar capture the lands across the sea. Then he'll be strong enough to turn his attention on Morenia." Hartley recited his king's plan as if it were news, as if it had not been part of Shea's nightmares for years.

"Sin Hazar may have great plans, but we're too close to Morenia for him to notice us yet. We'll be safe for a while longer."

"You can't know that!"

"No. But I know that I have to feed my children. And I know that the owls need to learn. I can't teach them how to debate, and you can't either. We'll send them to the priest in the village and trust to the Thousand Gods."

"I'll trust to my lions," Hartley grumbled. "I'm sending two with the owls."

"That's a good decision." Shea smiled at the boy. She wondered if she was saying the right thing, wondered if she was raising him properly. She asked herself such questions every day, about all the lions, and the owls, and her sole little swan. She wished that her husband, Bram, were still alive. But he had died ages ago, fallen by a fever even before King Sin Hazar had ravaged the land. Even before Sin Hazar had stolen all the men to fight his bloody war.

Before Shea could lose herself in the memories of all that she had lost, Tain began to tuck the orphans into their beds. The oldest sungirl listened to the other sunchildren say their prayers, watched the children bow to the west and thank the Sun for serving as their guide and inspiration as they toiled in the fields. Tain, taking her cue from Shea's practiced supervision, ignored the fact that no fields had been planted that year. She ignored the fact that they'd eaten their seed corn in the middle of winter.

Hartley put the lionchildren to bed, two to a cot, head to toe. Before he ordered his soldiers to sleep, he had them salute the sky. The Lion had risen late, hovering over the horizon in a dim spray of stars.

The owlchildren found their own way to their cots. They clustered into tight knots to continue debating the ways of right and wrong, knowledge and ignorance. At last, they fell asleep, arguing about how they could know with certainty that the Owl would return to the night sky in 40 days, as the constellation was supposed to do.

That left Shea awake with the swangirl, with the child who stubbornly refused to sleep at night. Serena paced back and forth through the dark hours, already restless with the longing that should have carried her to the Swancastle. If the Swancastle still stood. If there had been other swans nearby, to teach her the ways of right and wrong and decision making.

Shea could not help but think of Larina, her own beautiful, lost swandaughter. Sixteen years ago, Shea had labored through the night, pushing to bring Larina into the world while the Swan was still in the sky. Sixteen years. Before Hartley and Tain were born in their distant villages. Before the adult men in Sin Hazar's kingdom had been wiped out by the plague of war. Before the orphans had found their way south, to Shea. Larina had crowned just before the Swan sank below the horizon, and the priest had laughed as he tattooed a silver wing beneath the newborn's eye.

Shea sighed and forbade herself to think of Larina's beautiful face. She thrust down the familiar sorrow and frustration as she shuffled off to her closet and her cold, empty cot. She prayed her nightly prayer to all the Thousand Gods that King Sin Hazar's madness would end, that the man would give up his idea of conquering the lands across the sea, of using children as his army. If Sin Hazar forfeited his mad plan, little Serena could go live in the Swancastle with whatever swans remained in the kingdom. If only Serena were already grown.... If only Serena could take charge and issue orders to lions and owls and suns, all alike. If only Serena could save the skychildren....

THE NEXT AFTERNOON, SHEA SPREAD OUT HER RAGGED BLANKET in the clearing, calling the sunchildren to her. The boys and girls left their tattered baskets on the edges of the blanket and scrambled over each other, tumbling like puppies to be near the woman.

"Hush," Shea smiled. "We must rest now, while the Sun is highest in the sky."

The children settled down quickly, exhausted by their search for berries, for roots, for anything edible in the picked-over woods. Tor, the youngest boy, climbed into Shea's lap, and she rested a soothing hand on his head. The child turned about to trample her skirts flat, and then he sighed deeply, wriggling toward his dreams.

Bees buzzed in the afternoon air, exploring the sweet fruit in the baskets. Shea's eyelids grew heavy, and her head bobbed forward. She started awake twice, automatically noting both times that the lionchildren stood on the edge of the clearing. Of course, in these straitened times, the three young soldiers had no true weapons, but they gripped stout sticks, and they looked watchful.

Shea woke from a deeper sleep, startled by a rustling noise. She knew immediately that something was very wrong. A young man stood before her, dressed in ragged brown and green clothes. When he saw that Shea was awake, he leaped forward, settling his cold dagger against her throat. The youth's long hair was pulled back in a tight braid that stretched the skin around his eyes, twisting his face into a grimace. A vicious scar burned above his left cheek.

For a single dream-instant, Shea thought that she was looking at her own son. "Lan." Shea spoke softly, as if she feared to wake the sleeping children. This child had the same straight hair, the same nut-brown eyes. He had the same gawky frame of youth, of bones grown long before his body could fill out. Fifteen years old, she thought. Fifteen at most.

"Quiet, hag!" The boy swallowed his words in a growl, and Shea came fully awake, remembering that she was alone in the field with her orphans. Remembering that her Lan was grown. Grown and gone and dead.

Tor stirred in Shea's lap, shaking himself awake like a puppy. When he opened his eyes, he saw the dagger at Shea's throat and he cried out, waking the other suns.

"Hush, little ones," Shea soothed. "This visitor doesn't mean us any harm."

"I'll show you harm!" The youth stepped back so that he could wave his blade. "I'll show all of you the meaning of the word!"

"Nonsense." Shea set Tor aside and clambered to her feet. She longed to look about for the lions, for her protectors. What could have happened to the guards? Had Hartley let them fall asleep? Well, all she could do was try to buy the lions time to recognize the danger, to save the skychildren. Shea stretched a soothing hand toward the warrior-child's scarred cheek. "What were you before the war came, lad?"

"I'm a soldier now, a soldier in the troops of King Sin Hazar."

"Aye," Shea answered gravely, as she had answered Lan's own brave declarations when he went off to join the king. "I can see that. But what mark did Sin Hazar carve from your face?" The youth glared at her with hatred. "It can't have been a swan's wing—you're too harsh for that. I don't see you with the owl-sign, either, no deep thoughts for you. Perhaps the Sun, but then you'd know better than to fight a lonely woman and her children. I'm betting on the lion, then. I'll wager you're a lionchild."

The youth's knife wavered as he listened, and she saw the hated acknowledgment spread across his face. She remembered assuring her own Lan, when he first learned about his place in the world. "Aye, son, there's nothing to be ashamed of. We need lions, to be strong and brave and true. Lions protect old women and their babes. There's no shame in being a lionboy."

"I'm not ashamed!" His puckered scar darkened.

"And that's good and proper." She hastened to reassure him. She wanted him to set down his knife, to stop waving the weapon about. "Why should you be ashamed, fighting for good King Sin Hazar?"

As Shea spoke, the boy's lower lip began to quiver. Shea looked at his torn and filthy uniform, short in the sleeves, well above his ankles. The child's face was pinched; he looked hungrier than her own orphans. She realized that this child-soldier was too far from any army to be a loyal scout. What had made the boy flee the king's troops? What had made him run away, after he'd been taken in, after his birthright had been carved from his face? How much did he hate and fear his king?

With a scarce-thought prayer to Wain, the god of fate, Shea continued: "You don't need to stay with King Sin Hazar, son. You can join my children and me. We've all sorts of creatures with us. Swans and owls and suns. And plenty from the Lion."

The youth snarled and lunged forward, leveling his knife against Shea's throat. "I've captured you! You're just trying to confuse me!"

"Not at all, young man. I never try to confuse my children." Shea raised her chin, drawing on an impossible stock of bravery. A lion threatening a sun.... There was nothing in Shea's experience to explain a world gone so mad. "Toss away that knife, son, and have some of our food. Tain, bring this boy our berries." The lionboy's eyes darted to the baskets beside the oldest sungirl, and he swallowed audibly. The tendons in his neck stood out like blades of grass. "They're ripe," Shea crooned. "Full of juice. Sweet."

The youth lunged for the baskets. As he thrust his hands amid the berries, Shea's three lionchildren finally appeared from the edge of the woods, sticks and stones at the ready. "Drop our berries!" Hartley cried.

Shea watched as the soldier boy complied, but not before he'd been hit hard across the shoulders and the back of his legs. Hartley turned to Shea, his face blazing red with more than the afternoon Sun. "My lions and I.... We saw a boar, at the edge of the woods. We were going to bring back fresh meat." The lion swallowed hard and refused to meet Shea's eyes. "It got away."

Before Shea could decide whether to offer comfort or remonstration, Hartley whirled on his prisoner. "What's your name, boy?"

Berry juice ran over the enemy boy's fingers like blood. Hartley had to raise his stick, brandishing it like a bludgeon, before the youth spat, "Crestman." Before he could say more, Hartley snarled a command, and the lions secured him with their own ragged clothes, gagging him with harsh bonds.

That night, Shea waited until the sunchildren were asleep, until Serena was walking restlessly on the roof, before she summoned together the lions and the owls. "The king is getting closer. Crestman must have deserted, but Sin Hazar's recruiters can't be far behind. We ... we have to decide what to do." She swallowed hard. Decision wasn't her job. She was a sun, after all.

"Can there be any real question?" Hartley demanded. "If you give that Crestman to my lions, we'll make sure his trackers never find us. We can leave his body far from here. The king's men will pass us by, as they have for months."

"He's still a child," argued Torino, the eldest owl. "You know the teachings of the Thousand Gods. We cannot kill a child."

"Who's to say he's a child?" Hartley replied. "He's old enough to travel across the countryside on his own. He was old enough to join King Sin Hazar."

"He can't be any older than you are!" Torino retorted.

"And perhaps I'm not so much a child," Hartley countered. "Besides, that Crestman was ready to kill Shea." Hartley raised a hand to the lion-tattoo on his cheek, emphasizing his power with a blunt fingertip.

"He didn't kill her, though." Torino did not back down.

"You owls are supposed to be the thinkers!" Hartley rounded on the owlchildren, and Shea heard the boy's anger at himself, anger that his lions had let Crestman creep into the clearing. Hartley and his lions had failed the skychildren, and the breach could have been deadly for them all. "You're supposed to be the ones who find answers!"

One of the youngest owls climbed to her feet. "We're owls, Lion. Don't you doubt that." She turned to her fellows. "Come on, then. Like the priest taught us. Premise: We may kill to protect our safety."

"Counter-premise," another owl responded immediately. "No child may be killed."

"Premise," hooted a third child. "Children who fight for King Sin Hazar threaten our safety."

"You don't know he was fighting for Sin Hazar!" squawked one of the youngest owls. "Shea says he was deserting!" The debate disintegrated into childish argument.

Shea raised a hand to her aching eyes, shaking her head as she stumbled to the doorway of the small house. The night was flooded with light. The Moon was full, so brilliant that it nearly drowned out the Lion.

As Shea listened to the wind in the trees at the edge of her clearing, she was carried back to a time when the Sun had been the Sun and all the skychildren had known their places. That was when Lan and Larina were still alive. She had not been responsible for this motley crew, for this tangle of right and wrong and maybe. The king had been a good man, a man who provided for his people, even if he did sit on his throne, leagues and leagues away. No one had feared the king in those days.

Shea closed her eyes, and she could remember Larina's childish laughter, her joy at the world around her. The little girl had thrown her arms around Shea's neck each morning, her silver-marked cheek smooth against her mother's sun-starred one. Even now, Shea could feel Larina inside her bones, inside her breath, and for just an instant she heard her daughter whisper in her ear: "I love you, Mummy. I know you'll always be here for me."

Before Shea could answer, she was jerked back to her cottage. For an instant, she thought it was her own dreams that had pulled her, but then she heard the muffled cry again. She was at Crestman's side before the other children could reach him.

The young soldier was lashed to the one sturdy chair in the hut, his arms pulled tight behind him. A rag was bound across his eyes, and a gag slashed his parched lips. He moaned and rocked his chair back and forth, dreaming.

"Hush," she crooned, resting her chapped hand against his cheek. "Hush, little lion. It's all right. You're in my hut, here with your brothers and sisters. You'll be fine. You'll be safe."

Crestman quieted beneath her soothing touch, never fully waking. Shea sat by his chair long into the night, rocking back and forth and

thinking of Lan. Thinking of her lost son, who had been among the first wave of children sucked into the whirlwind of King Sin Hazar's schemes.

The next morning, Hartley confronted Shea as Tain served up bowls of acorn porridge. Shea knew the gruel was bitter, but at least she could put something in each of the small bellies beneath her roof. She scavenged an extra bowl and started to carry it to Crestman.

"The prisoner may not eat." Hartley's voice was flat.

"Nonsense! He's a growing boy!"

"He's a growing boy who would have killed you. You risk our safety and your own if you feed him."

"Hartley, I can't let him starve to death. I'd be no better than Sin Hazar."

"Torino," Hartley appealed.

The owl chimed in immediately. "The lion speaks the truth, Sunwoman. That soldier intended to kill us. To kill us and steal our food."

"But what—" Shea almost stopped, overwhelmed by the notion that she—a sunwoman—was debating an owl. "What if he wasn't deserting. I thought he was. It looked like he was. But what if he was just gathering troops to bring to Sin Hazar?"

"Is that any better?" Torino cocked his head to one side, and he sounded honestly curious about Shea's thoughts.

"That means he's not a bad person. He's merely trying to do as his king commands."

"But his king would command him to take all the lions. And Serena too."

Of course Sin Hazar wanted to gather up Serena. He wanted all the swanchildren, all the leaders. Poor Serena. The pale, moonstruck child was sleeping even now, huddled in her tiny private room beneath the eaves. The Sun's strong rays were too great for Serena—how could the swangirl possibly survive Sin Hazar's military camp?

"Very well," Shea acceded after a long minute's indecision. The words tasted bitter in her mouth. "To save Serena."

Hartley nodded his approval. "All right, then. Let's get the children organized. We'll head to the stream and try to catch some fish. The trout should finally have begun their run."

"Don't overstep your bounds, lionchild!" Shea snapped. "It's we sunfolk who know about gathering food, not you lions. Have you already forgotten what happened when you decided to hunt a boar?"

Hartley looked abashed, and Shea swallowed the anger that constricted her throat. First she was arguing with an owl, and now she was berating a lion! What was the world coming to? What evil had King Sin Hazar worked, even in her own house?

There was no sense in making Hartley look foolish, especially in front of the others. "You're right, though," Shea said after an uneasy pause. "Fish would be sweet on the tongue."

Only when Hartley had gathered the children together did Shea change her mind. "You go ahead, Hartley. Take the owls along with the suns. They all need sunlight and fresh air. No, no, Torino. No arguments. Take your owls and play your debates by the brook. Tain, keep an eye on everyone."

"But aren't you coming?" Tain seemed concerned.

"I have things to do here. This house doesn't take care of itself."

"I can't spare extra lions to guard you." Hartley frowned.

"Nonsense. You have to leave someone to watch over Serena, in any case."

"But there's an additional risk, with the prisoner."

"With a 15-year-old boy, tied to a chair? I may be a sunwoman, Hartley, but I'm not daft. I can take care of myself." The boy grumbled, and he left his two best lions to guard the cottage. He glanced back with every step, but he led the other children toward the distant stream.

Shea made sure that the lions left behind were busy scanning the horizon before she ducked back inside her cottage. She was moving to the hearth before she knew it, looking down at Crestman.

Crestman. Such a noble name for so young a soldier.

Hartley had tightened the youth's gag, and the rough cloth sawed into the corners of the young soldier's mouth. He glared at her, his scarred cheek livid in the gloom beneath the rafters. Shea thought of Lan, of the way her son had raged when she had punished him for stealing boiled sweets from the village. "I had nothing to do with this, child. The lions protect us. You should remember that much, from the days before you cast your lot with King Sin Hazar. Now I'll feed you, if you swear to stay quiet. If the lions outside hear you, I'll have Hartley to answer to. Do you promise?"

She held a bowl of porridge so that he could see the food he was missing. She imagined his belly clenching in hunger. Berries were no meal for a growing boy. Besides, he'd eaten their meager hoard hours before. At last, Crestman nodded. She set the bowl on the floor as she loosened his gag.

"Let me go!" he whispered as soon as he had worked spit back into his mouth.

"I can't do that, boy."

"They'll kill me!"

"And Sin Hazar will kill us all, when you lead him here. Kill us or steal my children." Shea kept her voice quiet, fighting for reason as if she were an owl.

"I won't lead him here. I promise. You were right. I was leaving the king's army. I don't want to be a soldier anymore."

"He'll find you, though. He'll track you down and bring you back to his camp."

"But I won't tell about you! I promise!"

"You'll have no choice. We've heard the stories about that man, about what he does to the children who desert him."

"No worse than what your lions will do to me!"

"They'll do what they need to. They'll do what's best for all of us."

"For all of you. Not for me." Crestman's voice broke across his harsh whisper. "You know they'll kill me." His eyes brimmed with tears.

"I know nothing of the sort. The priests have taught my little owls well. They'll think on this and decide what is right. Now, are you going to eat or not? I have to sweep the floor."

For a moment, she thought that Crestman would send her away. Then, the boy's belly rumbled, loud enough that she could hear it in the close room. "I'll eat."

She fed him the bitter gruel, using the spoon to wipe spilled porridge from his chin. She ignored the tears that trickled down his cheeks, silver against the scar from his missing tattoo.

The Sun was setting by the time the other children returned to the cottage. Shea heard them before she saw them. Their voices bounced off the trees. When the group emerged from the forest, they were in high spirits, singing and whooping. Four of the children held strings of fish—lithe, silver trout that danced in the dying sunlight.

Shea crowed praise for her charges, lavishing compliments as Tain cooked supper. She longed to give some of the flaky fish to Crestman, but she dared not. She had replaced his gag at the first sound of the other children, and now she tried to ignore the guilt that tugged at the back of her mind.

Hartley turned to her when everyone had finished eating, after the children had sucked the sweet flesh from heads and tails and fins. Shea's belly tightened at the grave expression on his face. "We've decided. Crestman must die."

"You can't!"

"We have no choice. If we let him go, he'll likely be caught by Sin Hazar's men. When they're through torturing him, they'll come after us. At the very least, they'll take Serena and conscript my lions. They might burn down the house. They might kill us all."

"So we'll keep him. We'll make him one of us!"

"We can't trust him, and I don't have enough lions to watch him every day. The owls finally agreed. We'll take him down to the stream and drown him. It will look like an accident, in case any of King Sin Hazar's soldiers come through here later."

"He's just a boy!" Shea exclaimed in anguish, and the words sounded oddly familiar, as if she had wailed them in the past.

"He's a soldier."

"Did all of you agree to this?" Shea rounded on the other children. Tain returned her stare placidly. Some of the younger suns looked abashed, but the lions all stared back without blinking. Shea caught a couple of the owls tilting their heads, studying her as if she were some curious specimen.

Torino stepped forward and nodded deferentially. "All of us discussed it. We owls debated it for the better part of the day. There are no reasonable alternatives. The soldier must die."

"Crestman! Say his name, at least."

Torino shook his head. "His name has no meaning. He's the enemy. His death will enable all of us to live."

Shea looked at her charges. Hartley gazed back with the solemn expression he used when he assigned his lions their guardposts. Torino blinked hard, but his face betrayed no emotion.

I want things the way they were, Shea thought. I want my own son and daughter. They were good children. They would know right from wrong. Shea raised her chin and announced, "I want this brought before the Swan."

"What!"

She had surprised Hartley. "I want to take this to the Swan. Let the Swan make the decision."

"Shea, you know that Swancastle is empty. King Sin Hazar came through there first of all. Your own daughter was taken."

She set her jaw against the memory. "We have our own swan. We'll ask her."

"Serena?" Hartley almost snorted his surprise.

"Serena."

"Don't be ridiculous! She's a child—"

"Serena," Shea repeated firmly, feeling the rightness of what she demanded.

"Fine." Hartley squinted in the dim light and nodded to Tain. "Fetch her downstairs."

Only a moment later, the oldest sungirl led Serena into the room. The little swan's pale features were creased into a frown, and her nose twitched at the lingering aroma of trout. She had eaten her share, along with the better part of Tain's portion, before she had gone up to her room.

Crestman was hustled upright, his hands bound tight behind his back. His mouth was still lashed tight with the gag. Hartley appointed two lions to stand beside the soldier. "The prisoner is to stay silent," Hartley snapped. "If he so much as sneezes, kill him. Do you understand?" The last question was thrust at the trussed-up child-soldier, not the guards.

Hartley turned back to Serena. "Swangirl," he said, and he made a stiff, formal bow. "We would have you decide a matter of justice."

Serena sniffed again, but a light of power kindled in her eyes. "Aye?"

"The lions and the owls have concluded that this prisoner must die. The sunwoman thinks his life should be spared. What do you say?"

Serena's voice went soft with wonder. "You want me to decide?"

Hartley responded gruffly, but his words were laden with ingrained respect. "You're the Swan. The only one we have."

Shea forced herself to step forward. She must speak out against her Lion. Hartley was wrong; Torino was wrong. Tain too. They were only children. Shea swallowed hard and worked her throat to get past a lifetime of belief. "Serena, Crestman does not deserve to die."

"Crestman," Hartley's voice grated over the lionname, "is a traitor to his people. He came to kill us. He raised steel against the sunwoman as the children gathered berries. He belonged to Sin Hazar. We have no idea what deviltry they taught him in their camps. He probably knows a dozen ways to kill you, Swangirl."

"He's just a boy!" Shea cried, and now she remembered the first time she had wailed those words. She remembered receiving the terrible news that Lan had been cut down in Sin Hazar's camps. Her only son had been murdered in the barracks of the child-soldiers, killed when he refused to go along with some brutal training regimen. Shea had cried out even before she realized that she was alone, that she had lost both Lan and Larina, and Bram so long ago. For just an instant, she had pictured herself kneeling in the middle of Sin Hazar's camps, on her knees among the children who served the king's cause. She had seen herself holding Lan's body, stretching out his boy-arms and his boy-legs.

But she had never seen him. She had never learned what Sin Hazar's troops did with Lan's body, although she'd heard all the rumors about archery practice and the children's ravenous hounds. Shea swallowed hard, knowing that she needed to plead her case, knowing that she needed to make Serena understand. The words would not come, though. Shea could only manage, "Serena, he's a child."

THE ROUGH CLOTH SAWED INTO THE CORNERS OF THE SOLDIER'S MOUTH.

"We're all children!" Hartley spat. "We're all children, and if you let that one live, all the rest of us will die."

Serena looked from Hartley to Shea and back again. A look of wonder brightened her pinched face. "You'll do whatever I say?"

"Aye," Hartley avowed promptly.

"Aye," Shea managed after a much longer pause. Serena was a swangirl. Serena must be obeyed. That was what Shea had always believed, what Lan had died for. What Larina had lived for.

"Then I say the soldier … dies." Serena's eyes grew wide at the release of pent breath from the children. She smiled as if she'd just discovered a new game. "Kill him at dawn."

All through the night, Shea lay on her cot, listening to her own slow breathing. She had been a fool to bring the matter before Serena, before a six-year-old child who had no concept of life and death. What had Shea been thinking? Why had she thought that Serena would have the maturity, the grace, of a mature, trained Swan? Certainly, Serena was not evil, she just did not recognize the power she held behind her silver-winged tattoo.

It had taken Shea hours to get the children into bed, hours to calm them after the confrontation on the hearth. Shea had finally resorted to brewing a tisane, surreptitiously adding a fistful of slumberleaf to the dregs of the day's milk. She covered the taste of the sharp herb with a generous dollop of honey, the last in the bare pantry. Even Tain had not suspected her duplicity.

Now, Shea dragged herself to the door, grabbing her ragged shawl against the night's chill. The Lion was low in the sky.

Sunchildren gave way to the sky in all things. Sun, then Lion, then Owl, and Swan, that was the order of the world. That was the truth that Shea had lived since she was a girl. That was the truth that she had taught to Hartley and Tain, to Lan and Larina, to all her sky-children.

Another star rose on the horizon, the first tip of the Swan's wing unfolding into the night. Shea closed her eyes and took a deep breath. As she exhaled slowly, she turned back to the cottage. The floor creaked as she walked toward the hearth, but she knew that the drugged children would sleep through any disturbance.

Crestman was watching her, his eyes glinting above his gag. His scar stood out against his pale flesh, dark reminder of King Sin Hazar. As Shea knelt beside the youth, she could smell the sweat on him, the cold, adult fear that slicked his wrists beneath his bonds.

"I can't let you go back to Sin Hazar," she hissed into the still night.

Continued on page 95

BY ERIC T. BAKER

From dungeon crawling to werewolves, adventurers can experience it all.

THE BIGGEST STORY IN THE PAPER-AND-DICE ROLE-PLAYING GAME WORLD THIS SUMMER IS the release of the third edition of *Dungeons and Dragons*. This is big news because *D&D* basically created the hobby and it remains far and away the best-selling role-playing game in the world. It is the RPG that everyone has heard of, even if they have never played it. It is not a license of a property created in some other media. In a very real sense, the role-playing community owns *D&D*, and is in turn owned by it.

Given that, a new edition of *D&D* all by itself would not be news. *D&D* has been under almost constant revision since it was released. Every year, and in some stretches of its 27-year history every month, has seen a new supplement released either replacing or adding onto the cannon rules. The formal, second-edition release of the game was in 1989, and that isn't nearly as big a deal as the release of the third edition because, in the time between then and now, *D&D* has effectively been bought out twice. Once when Wizards of the Coast purchased TSR, and then again when Wizards itself was purchased by Hasbro. Long shelved only in specialty shops and some book stores, the fact that *D&D* is now a Hasbro product means it will have that company's marketing dollars behind it, and that it will be moving onto shelves in toy and department stores. The hope of everyone in the role-playing industry (where it is believed a rising tide will lift all boats) is that the third edition will finally move role-playing as a hobby into the public consciousness and give it the mass appeal enjoyed by Monopoly and Trivial Pursuit.

White Wolf's Croatan Song, *a new supplement book for the* Werewolf *RPG, will provide players with new skills and powers.*

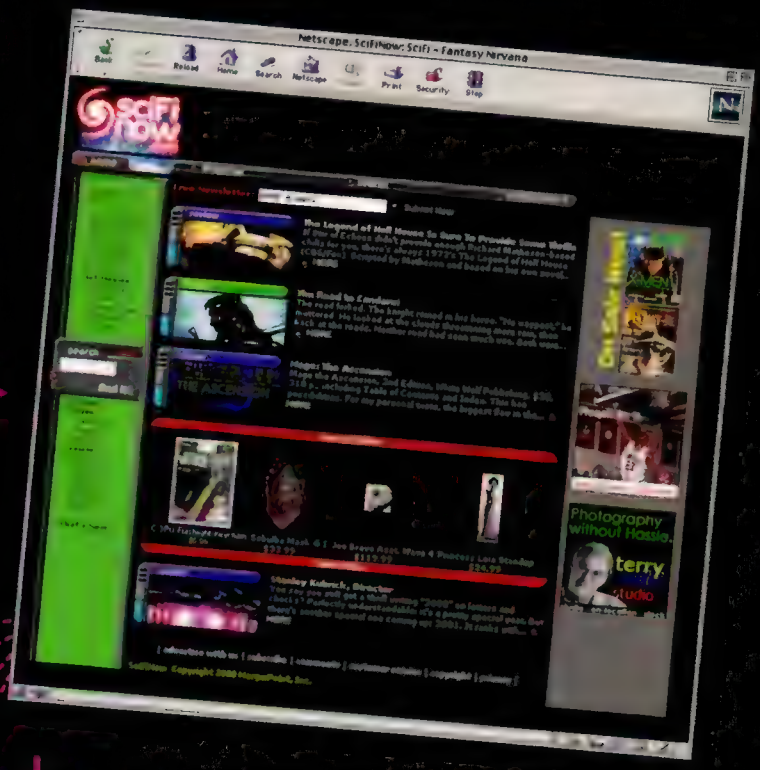
So with that pressure bearing down on them, Monte Cook, Jonathan Tweet, and Skip Williams (three of the best designers working in the role-playing field) were tapped to produce a game that would take the hobby to new heights, while not alienating all the people already playing. I can't give a final verdict on how they did without seeing the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (which will be out next month), but part of the new format was to put all of the basic rules in the *Players Handbook*, which is what I have in hand. So the preliminary verdict is, "I don't know," and "yes."

For me, someone who has been playing *D&D* off and on since 1979, the most amazing part of the third edition is how ordinary it seems. *D&D* was conceived originally as a wargame, and its mechanics were written to enable a style of play that is now familiar to everyone because of its adoption by thousands of video games. Players create a character, fight monsters with it, and gather treasure. This earns them experience so they advance in level and become more powerful. The characters then battle more powerful monsters to gather greater treasure, which earns them even more experience so they can become a higher level still, and thus

SCIFINOW.COM

SOMETHING DIFFERENT ON THE WEB

Do you like Sci-Fi? Well then, strap on those Spock ears, grab that lightsaber, and set your phaser to stun...we're about to show you the time of your life!



Sci-Fi Horror Fantasy Games Comics Music Fiction shopping Anime Books Movies Television

\+

You see, we're those wordweenies from Sovereign Media (the people who bring you this magazine, SCI FI and Realms of Fantasy), and we've down loaded gobs of articles from our magazines onto this cool new website. Original fiction, book, movie and game reviews, the latest sci fi and action movies and TV shows, and much, much more.

Plus, our editor brings you weekly updates of sci fi news and gossip. And, you can buy a subscription to any of our magazines, buy a gift subscription, back issue, or tons of cool sci-fi memorabilia.

SCIFINOW.COM TRY US. OR WE'LL BLOW UP YOUR PLANET.

add to your collection

with these mint-condition back issues

#1 best seller **Realms of Fantasy: August 1995**

Dragon's Heart by Beverly Saurez-Beard, The King's Return by Brian Stableford, Vampire Protector by Deborah Wheeler, Gahan Wilson: The Frog Prince, Terri Windling: Fantasy's Origins, and more.

Premiere Issue!
Realms of Fantasy: October 1994
Roger Zelazny: New Amber Adventure, Terri Windling: Myths & Folklore, Sword vs. Sorcery by L. Dean James, The Lurking Troll by Neil Gaiman, Under the Wizard's Spell by Jean Lorrah, The Art of Brian Froud

Realms of Fantasy: June 1997
Jane Yolen New Fiction!, Terri Windling: Trickster Legends, Barbarian Conqueror by Kristen M. Corby, The Spirit War by Diana L. Paxson, Shaman's Fight by Martha Wells, Free: Excerpt from R.A. Salvatore's The Demon Awakens, and more.

Realms of Fantasy: February 1998
Conan's Return by Dan Perez, Louise Cooper & Jane Yolen: New Fiction, Demon Lover by Peni R. Griffin, Immortal Queen by Sally McBride, and more.

Realms of Fantasy: April 1999
Arthur's Wishes by Tim Meyers, Legends of Love by Joe Mastroianni, Divine Desires by Richard Parks, Pain Game by M. Shayne Bell and more.

Realms of Fantasy: August 1999
Liam Neeson: Locked Inside The Haunted House, Interview: From Star Wars to Tolkien: The Brothers Hildebrandt, Gahan Wilson on Robert E. Howard, 1999 Nebula Winner Bruce Holland Roger, and more.

Only $3.99 ea. or 3 for $9.99 (plus $2 per item S&H).
Order Today! 800-219-1187
or send payment to: Sovereign Media, Penn Tower, Suite 300, 25 W. Third St., Williamsport, PA 17701

Amulets & Talismans
Send $1.00 with complete mailing address to:
GL&A
Department 4
257 North Calderwood St #186
Alcoa, TN 37701
Love. Power. Health. Healing.
Command the power of the ancients. Command the power of Solomon.
All amulets ritually charged by master magickian Arjuna.

Learn The Mystery—Live The Magic
WiccaCraft
Reclaim Your Personal Power
Seminary Of Wicca
P.O. Box 1366, Nashua, NH 03061
(603) 880-7237

Men's Conversation Line
1-888-949-4897
$1.50/min. Discreetly charged to Visa/MC
1-900-786-6266
$1.49/min. Discreetly charged to your telephone. Callers 18+. Touch Tone Phone Required. Compuline Reno, NV

RUSSIAN LADIES want to meet you!
Selected from over 80,000 applicants! Beautiful, educated, down-to-earth, sincere—seek romance & marriage!
FREE! COLOR PHOTO CATALOG 800-334-7077 For catalog only
EXCITING TOURS LIVE VIDEOS

Natasha 32 Nurse
36 Successful escorted tours since 1992!
EUROPEAN CONNECTIONS Customer Service 770-458-0909
Dept. 202 • P.O. Box 888851 • Atlanta, GA 30356 • www.euroladies.com

even more powerful. And so on. The goal of truly long *D&D* campaigns is to raise the characters to such heights that they might begin re-urbanizing the various gods.

The hallmarks of this style of play were characters defined by their class, plus simple, detail-light combat, and long lists of very specific items, monsters, and magic. Ever since *D&D*'s introduction, designers have been creating more and more "realistic" RPGs. Combat adjudicated in rounds of seconds instead of minutes, for instance. Wound rules so that characters don't fight at full strength, calmly absorbing damage until they are out of hit points and suddenly drop over like felled trees. Customizing characters by letting players buy them differing skills and special abilities. Doing away with hit dice and letting monsters be defined by their individual characteristics rather than simply by their race and type. And so on.

Through all of its changes *D&D* continued to stay true to its original model of game play, so what is amazing to me is how many of the more "realistic" conventions that are considered "industry standard" have been adopted by this edition of *D&D*. For instance, combat now takes place in six-second rounds. There are rules about facing and line of sight and there is a whole page devoted to all the actions you can take in a round. There is a scatter diagram on page 138, something that is common to most games where characters might throw something and miss, but new to *D&D*. Characters are still defined by their class, but players are now issued skill points when creating the characters and are then expected to buy skills for their character with them. In addition, players now pick a "feat" (special power) for the characters to start with, and the characters get more feats as they go up in level.

The fact that there are still character classes is one sign that *D&D* has not abandoned its origins. The other sign is that the designers kept hit points while not adding wounding rules. There are critical hits now, but they only increase the damage of a hit. They do not impair an opponent's ability to fight. Characters and monsters alike in *D&D* still fight at full strength until they run out of hit points, and then they fall over, dead or unconscious.

Will new players, encountering the *D&D Players Handbook* at their local Sears, be able to pick it up, gather some friends, and begin

ABOVE: Prepare to face monsters with magical abilities in Icewind Dale. *LEFT:* Ordo Nobilis *mixes history with imagination, allowing players to create campaigns and characters during the Middle Ages.*

a campaign? I don't know. I do know that anyone who can learn the third-edition rules can play any other game currently on the market.

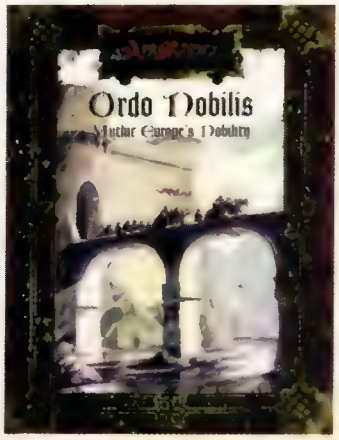
As far as people who are currently playing *D&D*, they will have no problem adapting. Many of them will already be playing with house rules that are similar (if less detailed) to what is contained in the third edition. What they are more likely to be upset about is that the rules have changed enough that all the statistics for all the nonplayer characters and monsters in all the supplements and modules they have bought over the years are going to need changing. Wizards is not planning to reissue all the old books with the new statistics in them. Instead, in the fall, they plan to release a conversion book which will let players make the changes themselves to the characters that need it. The corporate feeling is that most supplements are 90 percent background that work with any system so why put out books that are only 10 percent revamps? It is a good argument, but we'll see if players agree.

My emotions after reading the third edition *Dungeons and Dragons Players Handbook* are very similar to my emotions after playing *Quake 3*. It is a good, fun game, but not the groundbreaking, throat-grabbing leap forward I was rooting for. I recommend the third edition if you are looking for a good rules set to conduct a fantasy, dungeon-crawling campaign.

Speaking of dungeon crawling, Interplay and Black Isle Studios, the producers of the terrific computer role-playing games *Baldur's Gate* and *Planescape: Torment*, have now released another *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* (second edition *D&D*) based game. This one is called *Icewind Dale* and is set in the *Forgotten Realms* campaign background that was the setting for R.A. Salvatore's trilogy of books. Events in the game take place before events in the trilogy, so none of Salvatore's characters appear, but that just leaves room for players to create their own legends.

As with its predecessors, *ID* is a direct port of the second edition of the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* pen-and-paper RPG. Unlike the usual computer RPG, most players already have some idea of how the game's mechanics work. Like the other two games, *ID* comes on multiple CDs and is displayed in high-quality graphics. The game engine is the same point-and-click one used in the others as well. While easy to learn, the massive amount of repetitive movement will have most players learning the short-cut keys as quickly as they can.

What is different about *ID* is that the designers made a conscious decision to produce it as a classic dungeon crawl. Adventure begins in a tavern with a party of characters looking for adventure, and something like 90 percent of the game takes place in dungeons underground. *Baldur's Gate* was a questing game with the emphasis on fulfilling mission objectives while *Torment* was an "adventure game" with combat elements to its plot. *ID* is a combat game with a few adventure elements to keep the party moving



The Leather Barn

Complete your period outfit with handcrafted leather goods. Belts, cod pieces, vambraces, and more. We also have clay smoking pipes, kilt pins, tights, leg stocks and reasonable prices. Each item is made to order.

For a color catalog, send $3.00 to:
The Leather Barn
P.O. Box 506
Jarrettsville, MD 21084

FANTASY CRAFTS

Select from a variety of fantasy/medieval cross stitch charts, quilt patterns and other craft items.
CROSS STITCH - Hundreds of titles from: Dragon Dreams, Moongate Designs, Teresa Wentzler, Vermillion Stitchery & more.
3-D DECOUPAGE - Kits and Print Packs.
QUILT BOOKS - Celtic Applique and others
VISIT OUR ON-LINE CATALOG: www.fantasycrafts.com
MENTION THIS AD AND GET $5 OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER!

Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Mystery

Monthly catalogues listing the newest books and videos.
US & British titles. Customized catalogues for "wish lists."
All catalogue titles are DISCOUNTED!
Send $1 with complete mailing address to:
CHRONICLES BOOKSHOP
322 S. Shelby #202, Shelbina, MO 63468
www.chroniclesbookshop.com

Wearable Wire Art
Custom Woodcrafts
Fine Hand-Forged Wire Jewelry & Earrings
Staves, Canes & Pendants
SILVERHORN DESIGNS
silverhorn@home.com 410-719-8712
6400 Baltimore National Pike, Suite 445, Catonsville, MD 21228

Have An Idea?
We can help you submit to industry.
Patent Services.
©1999 ISC
ISC INVENTION SUBMISSION CORPORATION
1-888-439-IDEA

from battle to battle. Players need to make the characters ask the right people the right questions, but to really succeed at the game, what is needed is pinpoint control of the combat interface.

Given the nature of the game, some notes on combat are in order. One of the hallmarks of *AD&D*, because of its chip-away damage system, is that missile weapons (bows and crossbows) have always been strikingly ineffective in it. What players had discovered in *BG* and *PT*, however, was a way to make them work. Since most confrontations took place in confined spaces, players began building parties designed to push a crowd of summoned creatures through the tunnels ahead of their party. These simple, single dice characters might die in a single round against the tougher monsters around them, but they slowed those monsters down, giving the players' characters time to murder them with archery.

In *ID*, this glitch is solved two ways. One is by limiting the number of creatures a wizard may summon. As their spells get more powerful, wizards may summon tougher creatures, but not more of them. The second solution is to give the monsters more archers of their own so that it is downright dangerous simply to stand back and shoot at the monsters, particularly at low levels where a single orc arrow can slay the party's wizard.

The other thing to watch out for in *ID* is magic. The monsters have it and they aren't afraid to use it. The player runs a party of six adventurers and two of those had better be fighters, but at least one had better be a wizard to counter the clouds of (cool, well-animated) magic that will be coming the party's way. There are many new spells, including quite a few higher level spells, several of them ninth-level ones. Some horrific new spells are only usable by the monsters.

There are over 50 dungeon levels in *ID*; there are ice-filled mountain passes that lead to steamy geothermal cave systems; there are haunted Elven ruins and tunnels carved through the heart of a living glacier. Plus there are the 10 outdoor areas. Unfortunately, because of the difference in space and time, players can't bring their mature characters from *BG* to play in *ID*.

There are about 50 new monsters in *ID*, but unfortunately, dragons aren't one of them. The designers claim to have tried hard to come up with a way to do dragons in all their glory on the current game engine, but couldn't pull it off. Rather than have substandard dragons, the designers just left them out entirely.

Even without dragons, *Icewind Dale* is another beautiful, fast-paced game from Black Isle. For my personal taste, which is more to adventure and less to combat, *Planescape: Torment* is the better game, but *ID* is still one of the best CRPGs on the market.

New from White Wolf Publishing comes *Croatan Song* for their *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* RPG. *CS* is a historical source book, which means it contains a lot of background information about pre-Columbian North America, plus new skills and powers for the werewolves who inhabited it, but no NPCs, no scenarios to run in the era, and just three pre-made opponents.

Croatan of the title is the name of the werewolf tribe that is lost to the modern day. In the time before the European invasion of North America, however, the Croatan, the Wendigo, and the Uktena were the tribes that ruled over an untamed but also unsullied land. *CS* is by far the most upbeat White Wolf supplement I have ever read—upbeat in the "Things are good now, but they will soon all pass away" sense, but that is lighter than you usually get from the World of Darkness.

There are only four chapters and an introduction in the 128 pages of *CS*. The introduction is a long text piece that sets the stage by telling the tale of the three brothers who sired the werewolf tribes. Chapter one is the history of the werewolf tribes in North America from prehistory until the coming of the Europeans. Chapter two describes the various parts of North America and the native American nations that rule them, and the relationships of those nations to the werewolves. Chapter three is mainly for a Game Master. It contains story ideas, monster ideas, and some notes on allies. Chapter four has the character creation rules for mak-

Valentine Armouries
Reproductions of Historical & Custom Armour
Send $5 for catalog
4120 8th St. SE
Calgary, Alberta T2G 3A7 Canada
Visit us online at: http://www.varmouries.com

ing characters to play in the *CS* setting. There are also new rites, fetishes, totems, merits, and flaws. Unfortunately, there is no index, so keep your bookmarks handy.

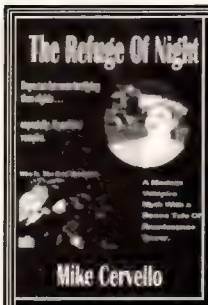
Croatan Song is not a supplement just for groups who want to play prehistoric Indian werewolves. Because of the weird nature of werewolf mysticism, it is also a source book for vision quests and reclaimed memories and the other sorts of spiritual time travel that the characters in a *Werewolf* campaign are prone to. If your campaign is taking a turn in that direction, then this is a supplement that is worth reading.

Meanwhile, lots of people are playing *Ars Magica* in medieval Europe, and some of those people may want to play characters of noble birth. If so, things have just gotten easier for them with the publication of *Ordo Nobilis*, the *AM* supplement about and for noble characters in Mythic Europe. Like all *AM* supplements, *ON* is a mix of history and imagining because the setting is not the 13th century the way it was. It is the Middle Ages the way its then inhabitants believed it to be.

There are nine chapters, a preface, an appendix, a bibliography, and an index in the 221 pages of *ON*. Chapter one outlines noble society. Chapter two considers the questions of land, character improvement, and lists new virtues and flaws. Chapter three is a primer on medieval law, including rules for medieval trials. Chapter four is dedicated to courtly leisure with special emphasis on hunting. Chapter five covers combat, including new melee rules, mass-combat rules, and a writeup on the Battle of Bouvines. Bouvines is the prototypical medieval battle. Three thousand knights fought for an entire day, and only two died. Chapter six of *ON* contains details on all the royal realms of Mythic Europe.

The last three chapters of *ON* are each a scenario highlighting a facet of noble life detailed in the previous chapters. "A Bad Knight's Work" takes a party of companions and grogs to a tournament. Complications ensue. "The Law of the Land" starts out as a simple business loan by the covenant that ends up in an extended court case. A rare scenario with almost no excuses for combat, but lots of chances for politics. "On the Respective Merits of Twilight and Gloaming," the ways and manners of the human nobility are explored in a satirical trip to the Faerie Court. The appendix contains statistics for warriors of various types, horses, and hounds.

If you're not running a campaign, but are a fan of the Middle Ages, then *Ordo Nobilis* is just plain old useful. If you are running a campaign in a medieval setting with a different rules set than *Ars Magica*, then *Ordo Nobilis* is very useful. If you are involved in an *AM* campaign, then *Ordo Nobilis* is a fantastically useful supplement. If you fit into none of those categories, then you can probably skip it, but pick it up and flip through it, just to be sure. ❧



CVK Publishing Presents:

A Lena Banks Double Feature!

Make checks/money orders payable to:
CVK Publishing
PO Box 74-8086
Rego PK, NY 11374

Press on: THE REFUGE OF NIGHT

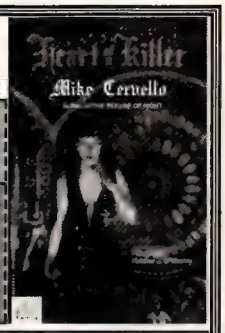
"An exciting double dose of diversion for fans of horror fiction." --THE BOOK READER

Heart Of A Killer
by Mike Cervello
ISBN 0-9654364-1-1 $16.00
(525 pages) S/H $3.00

SPECIAL OFFER:
Order both books and get free S/H + take $2 off the total for an extra savings ($18.95 Total) (NY please add sales tax.)

Press on: HEART OF A KILLER

"Cervello keeps this tale lively with new challenges for the field-tested Lena Readers will spend lots of time trying to second-guess Cervello's next move . . . Goth and gore come alive"--THE BOOK READER



*****Free on The Internet*******
See it in color and do your own book review. Read 2 free chapters of ***Heart Of a Killer*** on line.
http://www.outcrybookreview.com/CVKpublishing.htm
e-mail: CVKPUBLISHING@NETCOM.COM
buy it now on line from: Barnes&Noble.com and other on line book sellers, or through special order at your local Boarders, or Barnes & Noble store.

Dare to enter?
This vampire belongs to two worlds--the living and the dead.

In a world where only the supernatural can destroy the supernatural, we have a champion. Forget everything that you know about the undead. The rules have changed. Try stabbing a vampire through the heart with a wooden stake and the undead will only laugh at you before they retaliate. Silver blades and bullets are useless as well. Sunlight only transforms them into corpses, until the next nightfall. Then, they will regenerate, no matter what has happened to their bodies and resurrect from the dead. How do you kill someone who cannot be killed? The best weapon against a vampire is another vampire. She is, Special Agent Dr. Lena Banks with the FBI fighting for mortals.

The Refuge Of Night
A Modern Vampire Myth With A Bonus Tale Of Renaissance Terror
by Mike Cervello
ISBN 0-9654364-0-3
Trade Paperback 70 pages
Price: **$6.38** which includes S/H.
(NY please add sales tax.)

Coming Soon

CVK Publishing is going Video. See vampires Dr. Lena Banks, Donna Tella, and Romola Romano brought to life.

The Weapons Emporium *"We have yore sword!"*

Ancient, Medieval, & Renaissance Weapons & Armour

Come visit our armoury in the marketplace at: www.weaponsemporium.com

If ye are in need of a fine blade, bring thy noble self to the most complete source of ancient and medieval weapons.

1-800-932-7660
Send $4.00 for a color catalog to:
P.O. Box 992, Denison, TX 75021

Adventurers Wanted!

Looking for a new gaming group?

Try out **Adventurers Guild**, a fantasy rpg played by mail and email. Send now for a free info & startup kit.(overseas add $3 US)

Entertainment Plus
PO Box 2578, Dpt. F
Appleton, WI 54912

www.epmgames.com

First turn refunded if not satisfied

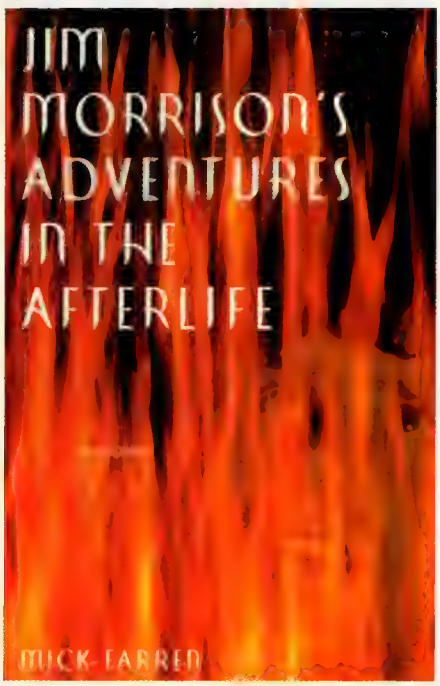
Bo Shannon Designs
Call for a free flyer of Fantastic Dragon Jewelry
1-800-954-3712

FREE SHIPPING
MC & VISA accepted

BOOKS

Continued from page 22

and Mala Revell. Mala, a young woman of 20 when the book opens in 1965, has been newly appointed as guardian to her adolescent nephew, Enzo—whom she almost immediately loses to a kidnapper who bears a certain misplaced kinship to Enzo. Aunt and nephew will not reunite for 15 years, during which time each one will undergo the oddest adventures in various places around the globe, Mala plunging into war and later taking to the



stage, while Enzo enters a life of privilege with his rich uncle, a life nonetheless full of treachery and danger.

Christopher achieves a miraculous fusion in this book: Not only does he masterfully juggle many vivid characters and their eventful lives in his direct yet poetic prose, but he also weaves a symbolic net comprised of asteroids, stars, spiders, memories, lost lovers, parents, and a dozen other potent icons. Oscillating gracefully, the plot and the symbolism continually swap prominence, lending this hefty, leisurely novel the majesty of the changing seasons. Erotic and cerebral, calm and frenzied, quotidian and exotic, this book makes our tired old world seem positively enchanted.

***Jim Morrison's Adventures in the Afterlife**, by Mick Farren, St.Martin's, 453 pages; hardcover, $25.95*

At least since Mark Twain, modern Fantasy writers have fearlessly ventured past the gates of death to examine possible afterlives. Recent examples of this infernal, purgatorial or heavenly brand of speculation include Philip Jose Farmer's *Riverworld* sequence (1971-1983); Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven's *Inferno* (1975); and the shared-world series helmed by Janet Morris and C. J. Cherryh that began with *Heroes in Hell* (1985).

The latest mind-blowing entry in this vein is Mick Farren's *Jim Morrison's Adventures in the Afterlife*, and it's a ribald, rollicking, rambunctious postmortem journey. Farren, himself a musician, has chosen in the character of the famous Doors singer a modern "poet-saint" whose every instinct and motivation Farren—whose prose style resonates with that of Norman Spinrad and John Shirley—completely comprehends and can convincingly convey. Coequal with the Lizard King, Farren establishes two vivid female protagonists, Aimee and Semple McPherson. On Earth one individual, a famous evangelist, in the afterlife this complex woman has literally split into two separate individuals along light and dark fracture lines. Aimee, the good girl, is soon pushed to the background by Semple, the bad girl, but the story doesn't suffer for this authorial decision. (Aren't villains always more interesting than heroes anyway?) Subsidiary characters such as Doc Holliday and Moses round out the cast.

The somewhat shaggy-dog and episodic plot concerns the eventual carnal and psychic union of Jim and Semple at the behest of the lurking gods of the afterworld. But really this MacGuffin is just an excuse for Farren to take us on a rollercoaster ride through his various surreal venues. As Jim observes, "The Afterlife was a million times more psychedelically complex than the imaginings of Saint John the Divine." By the time you experience such treats as a ride down a river Styx filled with floating mines and crashed B-52s, you'll surely agree.

***Antarktos**, Robert Price, ed., Chaosium, 572 pages, trade, $19.95*

Superb entertainment value for your money is the hallmark of the Chthulu Mythos collections from Chaosium (950-A 56th Street, Oakland, CA 94608). Under the guidance of erudite editor Robert Price, these volumes offer synergistic thematic arrangements of eldritch tales new and old. *Antarktos*, the latest entry, centers around Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness*, putting this pivotal polar story in full context with its predecessors (Poe's "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket") and its heirs (Colin Wilson's "The Tomb of the Old Ones," a story getting its first print appearance here). Price's colloquial yet scholarly introductions offer the perfect setting for these 10 horror classics.

***The Snow Queen**, by Eileeen Kernaghan, Thistledown Press, 158 pages, trade, $14.95*

A certain fairy tale featuring an icy enchantress and her besotted male victim has inspired many a contemporary author, from Joan Vinge onward. Now Eileen Kernaghan offers her own clever and affecting transliteration of this account of love and sacrifice in *The Snow Queen*, where she transposes Hans Christian Andersen's story to 19th-century Scandinavia, and splits the traditional heroine in two. Gerda, who loves the hubris-blinded Kai, represents the civilized, industrial side of life, dwelling peacefully with her parents in a small town. Ritva, daughter of a female shaman and her robber husband, knows only an antipodean existence, all magic and darkness and brutality. When Kai is abducted by Madame Aurorae, evil polar queen in disguise, Gerda sets out on a rescue mission that delivers her into Ritva's world. In quiet, economical, but carefully considered prose, Kernaghan offers rousing adventures and a concluding revisionist lesson that

speaks more to individualism than any textbook feminism. Contact Thistledown at **www.thistledown.sk.ca** or at 633 Main Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7H 0J8, Canada.

***At the Foot of the Story Tree**, by Bill Sheehan, Subterranean Press, 350 pages, hardcover, $40.00*

If only all critical studies were as well written, witty, and readable as Bill Sheehan's *At the Foot of the Story Tree*, all partisans of fantastic literature would benefit and rejoice. Sheehan's book-length examination of the works of Peter Straub is as compulsively enjoyable as many works of fiction. Offering balanced insights, historical context, biographical tidbits, and valuable, concise synopses, Sheehan charts the career to date of one of our master fantasists. Expertly blending quotes from Straub himself, snippets of text, and acute critical conclusions, Sheehan impresses us with his wide-ranging mastery of the relevant literature and establishes Straub's importance beyond all doubt. Highly recommended. Contact Subterranean at **www.subterraneanpress.com** or at P.O. Box 190106, Burton, MI 48519. ❧

Paul Di Filippo

Continued from page 39

affect the human or animal mind at a distance. Research has already shown that fairly strong magnetic pulses can cause firing of neurons in the brain. With one of these staves pointed at one's head, the firings of one's neurons might be controlled fairly precisely by varying the frequency passing through the staff. One could be entranced with theta frequencies, stimulated with alpha frequencies or higher, or actually put to sleep using frequencies around 4-6 Hertz. The staff of Hermes is cited in mythology as having an anesthetic effect.... This device also has the potential to be immensely useful for healing. Preliminary evidence has shown that when hit at proper resonant frequencies, parasites, bacteria, and viruses may be selectively destroyed...."

Gulick's assertions may sound rather fantastic, but he has actually conducted tests of his machine which explain much of the caduceus symbology in a rather unexpected way. He says, "I was hitting my staff (which had a compressed caduceus winding) with pure sine modulated DC current.... During my experimentation, my mother called in from the other room (she didn't know what I was doing) and asked me if I was 'playing sounds on my computer.' I told her no and asked her what she meant. She told me that she was 'hearing tones in her head.' It would seem fairly possible that what she heard might have been caused by my experimentation.... I am in the process of constructing a staff using conductive ribbons rather than wire. This modification will allow much greater efficiency and signal stability."

From a purely materialistic angle, Gulick's caduceus could explain the link between Hermes' staff and his other trademark, the lyre. It also explains why, prior to the current caduceus, Hermes's staff was a staff entwined with colored ribbons.

Despite what some theorists say, symbolism is not arbitrary. I would go as far as to say that it is never arbitrary when it is a human act because what we consciously believe to be arbitrary connections are almost always unconsciously meaningful. The caduceus, like most symbols from antiquity, has accumulated a spectrum of often-conflicting meanings over the ages, becoming, in the process, a frustrating summarizing symbol. But those meanings, as you have seen, are accessible through a variety of approaches.

So the caduceus could be the blueprint for a machine used for mind control and healing, a diagram of how the human body is its own vehicle for transcendence, or merely an accidental symbol for the medical profession. Take your pick, but apply your caduceus wisely; remember that the most important rule for the physician is, "First, do no harm." ❧

ELFQUEST
"FANTASY WITH TEETH"
SINCE 1978
for a free copy of our catalog (books, graphic novels, and more)
phone toll-free 877-WOLFRIDER
visit us at www.elfquest.com

Music from a Distant Age....
Rediscovered for the New Millenium
What if the King
Should Come To The City
a new CD of Renaissance Keyboard Music unlike any other
wrought in the *Spirit of Both Then and Now*
Send $14.95 plus $2.50 shipping and handling
(NY residents add 8.25% sales tax) to: Penguin on the Telly Ltd.
JAF Station, PO Box 2260, New York, NY 10116
Visit our website: www.penguin-ltd.com
Tel/fax 718/852-1286

HEY HEY

Continued from page 62

"The game."

"What game?"

"See," he said, "already you're forgetting."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Malcolm."

"We're fans," he went on. "We follow it across states, across provinces."

"Why? Are you on the run?"

"We're just people who have things to forget. Understand? I told you it's impossible to remember the game, but that's not everything; if you think about something while playing, you tend to forget that, too. I don't know the reason; something about how the brain arranges memories. We've got things we would rather not remember, so we follow it, and keep our worst memories close at hand. We're fans of the game, Jack, and what it can do for an ordinary person."

I was terribly confused, but I said, "How much can one person want to forget?"

"That's the thing of it. Once you've begun, you keep finding more memories you'd rather not keep."

"You lied about being a professor," I said.

"I used to be a professor. That's how we got started."

"Where are you from?"

A smile spread across his face. "I don't remember."

Behind me, Olson's voice boomed: "ARREST HIM, JACK. MAKE A CITIZEN'S ARREST."

Malcolm said, "Are you going to detain me, Jack?"

I looked to the school, the edifice, with the children watching, curious.

"You better start running," I said, "while I'm still unsure."

The document in my hands had been delivered in a package with no return address. Even before I opened it, I suspected that it came from Malcolm's group. Inside was a collection of information about a game, one that lurks within our culture, perpetuated by generations of children but unknown in the world of adults. I had to go over the material many times. In the top margin of the article I was reading, somebody had scribbled, "apocryphal information."

Nepenthe—The term derives from the Greek *nepenthes* and refers to a potion supposedly used by the ancients to induce forgetfulness of pain or sorrow. Is it possible that Greek scholars, in their philosophical investigations, discovered a means of forgetting memories? If so, it should not surprise us that it got transmuted into the idea of a potion, a better plot element for stories and legend. Perhaps, like our game, their *nepenthe* was too difficult to express without a symbol....

I hadn't seen Malcolm since that day on the playground.

Maybe he was still in Darby, he and his friends, laying low until the alarm at our school subsided. But the stamp on my package had been canceled in Idaho. Olson had been livid when I let Malcolm go without a struggle, and the district had agreed to hire private security to guard the property. I'm sure Malcolm was accustomed to such situations, chasing something as nebulous as a game that couldn't be remembered, and lingering around children to experience it. It would be hard not to seem a crackpot, or worse.

But for a pair of teachers, it was not as difficult.

I folded the article, put it in my pocket.

Agnes stood beside me as we monitored the children. Sure, there was a guard now, but they couldn't do without a teacher, too, to hand out discipline as usual. We sat on the steps and ate lunches we had packed that morning. It was cold in the mornings now, the lawns frosted, the air nippy. We poured soup from a thermos and passed the cup, more to warm our hands than for nourishment.

"What is it we're supposed to watch for?" she said.

"At the outset something will seem vaguely familiar, or you'll even recognize a game from childhood. But the activities change and you feel that you might know the rules, even if you can't articulate them. You hear one word repeated—hey—and another, which doesn't seem part of the English language as it is commonly known. What exactly the kids will be doing I can't say, but the game involves hiding in the open, and players subordinating themselves to others."

She took a sip of the soup. "And you want me to ... what?"

I reflected a moment before speaking. "I don't know what exactly haunts you, if it was what the doctor said to you in that examination room, or the operation that followed, or maybe the funeral. No! Don't tell me. Don't even think about it. At least not unless the game starts."

"And then?"

She had heard my explanation of the secret game, and the deeper secret, its side effect. She had listened without voicing doubt or skepticism, and this made me realize something about my wife and Malcolm and the others: that it was one thing to live with a chain of disappointments, terrible regrets, big mistakes. It was quite another to live with the possibility of erasing them from your mind.

"Think of what you need to forget, and let the game wash over you. Afterward, I imagine we'll be slightly different people."

She hung an arm over my shoulders, and I was glad for the gesture, the first she had made toward me in many days, and the best insulation I could have asked for as we stared at grounds that became increasingly hard and white and hostile to childish doings. It would not be as long a winter as the one that had first threatened, and if it was harsh, we could take comfort in the fact there was a way to tear it from our book of memories, later. ❧

SPIRIT STONE

Continiued from page 79

"And," she said, hoping that the spirit could hear her, "my freedom would be bought at the cost of your slavery."

Picking up a rock, she smashed the spirit-stone.

There was a whirling around her like a windstorm, but without dust. The air around her grew bright, like a dancing blue flame; her eyes watered, and she closed them.

—She saw a woman like herself, but with her hair loose and her face unveiled, forging the spell of the necklace. *Destroy*, the woman whispered as she worked. *Burn*—

—She saw the spirit of the spell-chain like a child with eyes of flame, buried alive in the scalding sand. *No way out; no way to escape but to unleash the power bound into the spell.* Sarai realized with horror that the spirit had lied to her, in its desperation to escape; its power couldn't heal, couldn't protect. All it could do was destroy—it had tempted her with power in the hope that its power would break the stone, as well, and set it free.

There was tremor in the earth, and a cracking sound directly under her feet; Sarai went cold with fear, thinking that she had set the spell in motion after all, and would destroy everything around her. Then she heard the spirit speaking, but in her ears this time:

As you gave me a gift, so I give you a gift. Water will find you, wherever you are. This power is yours. Nothing can take it away from you. Cross the desert, if you like, or stay here, but never fear that you will die like your mother if you leave.

The ground trembled again, and Sarai smelled water. Then the spirit was gone, the earth was still, and the quiet desert was alive with panicked camels and screaming children. Everyone stumbled out of the tent, Mirel clasping her baby. Sarai started toward her; Mirel belonged in bed.

"Sarai!" Mirel cried. "The ground moved!"

Kara reached the spot where Sarai had been standing and stared. "There's a huge hole here," she shouted. "What have you *done*, spider?"

Laran reached the spot. He knelt to peer into the hole, sniffed the air, and finally dropped a stone down into the darkness. "It's a well," he said.

Kara looked at Sarai again, and fell back a step. Nobody but Kara would believe tonight that this well was Sarai's doing—but they would believe, eventually. Sarai slipped her arm around Mirel. "The ground is calm again," she said. "Let me help you back to bed."

I will give my clan healthy babies and living mothers, Sarai thought—and water, now, wherever we go. And if they fail to appreciate what I bring them, I will find a clan that will. Or I will find the ocean that the spirit spoke of.

But she didn't *have* to run away to be free, Sarai knew. She was free now. ❧

SKYCHILDREN

Continued from page 85

He blinked, as if he understood. "I can't let you lead that man to my babies."

Shea thought of the river that flowed through the woods, the cool, clear water that would steal this boy's life. Her hands shook as she knelt beside Crestman. She could not trust him, alone in the world; he'd surely bring Sin Hazar's men. Even if the boy did not intentionally seek out the king's soldiers, he'd be found, tortured. He needed assistance. He needed Shea.

The boy's eyes were bright as she tugged at his bonds, and she shook her head as she slipped off his gag. "Silence, boy," she hissed. Then, almost to herself, she muttered, "It's time we changed things."

Change.

So much would be different. The children would be on their own. Alone. Abandoned.

No, she told herself. Not abandoned. Shea had trained Tain and Hartley and Torino. She had done a good job, preparing them for the day when she would no longer be their mother, when she could no longer protect them. They could forage for food—Tain had proven that. They could fight to preserve themselves—Hartley had proven that. They could debate problems and derive solutions—Torino's owls had proven that. Shea had raised her children to survive without her.

With Crestman, she would have to decide which road to take. She would have to decide when they should eat, when they should move, when they should lie low. So much would be frightening, and terrible, and necessary.

Shea picked free the last knot, and then she helped the lionboy to his feet. She steadied him as the blood flowed back into his legs. "Wait a minute. Wait until you can feel your feet."

Ignoring her, Crestman bolted for the door. He stumbled on his blood-starved feet, though, and she caught him before he fell. Her fingers were tight on his arm as she jerked him around to face her. "I'll have none of that, lionboy! If we're going to survive on the road, you'll listen to me." Shea swallowed hard and raised her chin. "You'll do as I say."

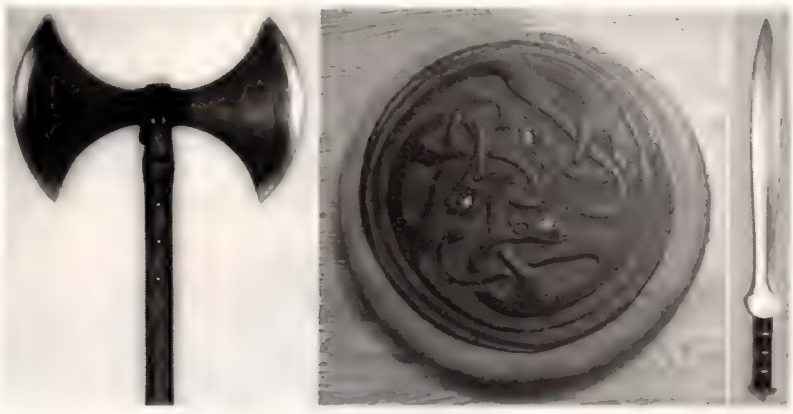
Crestman stared at her for a long minute, and she read the emotions on his face as clearly as if they were the stars in the sky. He wanted to speak out. He wanted to remind her that he was a lion, that she was only a sun. He wanted to put Shea in her place.

Shea stood her ground, though. She tightened her grip on the lionboy's arm, her fingers pinching until she felt bone. At last, Crestman nodded, a single, taut bob of his head that told her he understood. He knew that things had changed.

They disappeared into the forest as the Swan crested over the horizon. ❧

Age Of Chivalry

The finest Medieval and Renaissance Arms, Armor, & Clothing.



www.AgeOfChivalry.com

Toll Free: 1~877~Chivalry AgeOfChivalry@aol.com

◆ Hand Painted Metal Shields ◆

Rampant Lion Designs, LLC

The Art of Heraldry

• Coats of Arms • Custom Shields

• Celtic & Medieval Artwork

See us at **www.rampantliondesigns.com** or join us at the **Maryland Renaissance Festival** Weekends & Labor Day - Aug. 26 to Oct. 22. Send $2 ($3 outside U.S.) for Catalog to: Rampant Lion Designs, Dept. F • PMB 220 • 1290 Bay Dale Dr. • Arnold, MD 21012, or call **(410) 544-3255** for info.

ROBERT A. MADLE

B ❖ O ❖ O ❖ K ❖ S

Science Fiction & Fantasy Magazines & Books From 1900 to Present

Many Rare & Unusual Items Collections Purchased (Large & Small) 96 Page Catalog Send $5.00 to:

Department ROF
4406 Bestor Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20853

301-460-4712

Learn Medieval Sorcery

Complete Course! Dramatic 75 Min. Video & 230 page Book – Conjure Spirits to Visible Appearance! Become a Real Wizard – The Magick of Solomon. Master's Course $49.95 ppd. From:

C.H.S., Inc., P.O. Box 403, Dept. RoF, Silverado, CA 92676 +$2.00 Canada. +$10.00 Overseas Airmail. Calif. res. add sales tax. Checks & M.O.s in U.S. funds

http://members.aol.com/CHSOTA/productions.html

JOHN HOWE

Continued from page 73

kept it for a month, then gave up and took it back; certainly I remember it had three times as many return-dates stamped in the front as the other two!"

What, for John, is the appeal of Tolkien's work? "Well, to start with, it has the ring of truth. It is 'true' in the sense of true myth. The questions raised in the story are always the essential ones to the collective conscience. Essentially, Tolkien describes a universe where I really feel I could draw everything with pleasure. Despite his regrettable penchant for jewelled scabbards and hilts, his Middle Earth is simply a visual enchantment.

"I absolutely love Tolkien's concept of hopefulness without hope, and the hurt that Frodo sustains places him beyond the reach of those critics who accuse the author of being too kind to his characters. It is done with such restraint, I think it's overlooked: the parting at the Grey Havens is a truly great moment in modern literature.

"I read the books to my son when he was seven or eight; it took us months and months at a rate of five or six pages every evening. I thought I could cut that final chapter up into two or three readings, but the closer we got (I already had a lump in my throat) I heard him start to sniffle and swallow, so I had to keep going right to the end. It went way, way past lights out, but it was a marvellous moment!"

There are now hundreds of books that capitalize on the phenomenon of Tolkien's popularity. Indeed, John Howe has designed jackets for a good few of them! How many of the current proliferation of Fantasy books does he think are truly indebted to Tolkien?

"More than many authors would like to admit. Tolkien certainly established a market for Fantasy. Perhaps his greatest feat is that he really didn't try to invent anything new; by which I mean he didn't search out novelty for novelty's sake."

How then, with so many other Fantasy books now on the book shelves does, Tolkien maintain his appeal?

"Since commercial success was the last of his concerns, perhaps that's what gives his work the thought and density that only years of revisiting an obsessive theme can bring. This may sound silly, but was he really writing a Fantasy book or was he retelling, in his own words, something we all accept as part and parcel of our culture? Hobbits, of course, are his most original invention in the true sense, but perhaps it's this lack of 'novelty' that makes him so appealing, he is outside fashion and fad. He also allows his readers to complete so much of the story from their own personal experience."

Since, in his line of work, John Howe is obliged to read a great deal of Fantasy literature what, for him, separates a good Fantasy novel from a mediocre one?

"Originality, or at least an original twist on an old theme. And backed by good research and an honest feeling for the subject matter. So-called historical Fantasy is the most disappointing: it's neither decent Fantasy nor satisfying from a historical point of view."

When listing which authors John thinks succeed in creating books that are uniquely their own, he is quick with another catalogue: beginning with Robert Holdstock ("I shove *Mythago Wood* at everyone who comes to our place") and A.A. Annastasio's Arthurian cycle ("it is so weird!"); Robin Hobb ("she has poetic depth") and Charles de Lint ("though he's really a poet not a prose writer").

Another favorite book is Mary Gentle's *Ash*: "Her pure historical bits are irreproachable, and she makes an amazingly plausible and unexpected mix of history and Fantasy—though just about all I can take in the blood-and-guts department! Other authors that really get me going fall outside the Fantasy category—or are no longer of this world!"

Which brings us back to Tolkien. There's a new calendar and a *Lord of the Rings Diary*, full of haunting Howe imagery: Gandalf standing on the back of Gwaihir, the great eagle, after being rescued from his imprisonment in black, flinty tower of Orthanc, the wizard's flying beard, the eagle's beating wings blue-silvered with moonlight; or the murky, twisting passages of Shelob's lair as the huge, malevolent spider—all spines and a yellow-black sickliness—prepares to pounce on the fleeing Frodo.

Like so many of John Howe's illustrations, they look as though they had been effortlessly achieved. But are they? Does he ever give up, start again?

"Oh definitely. There are usually a few points along the line where it just feels awful, but you have to work past those. I've learned to give up immediately if it doesn't start off right. I used to think painstakingly applying detail could save anything, but it only makes it worse. You end up with an incredibly detailed piece of artwork where the initial drawing is weak or the composition bad; it's better to discarded it immediately."

So how does he know when to *stop*?

"When I'm fed up, or when FedEx is knocking at the door! Actually, stopping is a welcome decision. You can go on forever adding things, beefing up contrasts, details. What you can't do is improve the initial decisions you made. Flogging dead horses is not constructive!"

John Howe—along with fellow Tolkien artist Alan Lee—has also been working on design concepts for Peter Jackson's forthcoming film trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings*, currently being filmed in New Zealand.

"I must have ground down hundreds of pencils in New Zealand. I'd never done anything in pencil since art school, believe it or not. Working on the film was a revelation. Usually I do very physical messy sketches, but I learned to slow down and make pencil renderings, some of which ended up several yards long! It was an intense experience. Very stimulating. Working with people like Alan Lee keeps you on your toes, and it is exciting to be part of a great creative chain rather than working alone.

"The means at the disposal of an operation like that are incredible. Seeing a few drawings of Baradur, for example, turn into a six-meter-high model is really breathtaking. To draw a Fell Beast or a Balrog, and see them turn into sculptures and then further evolve inside computers is amazing ... I kept thinking, all I have to do is ask: I could have all those things from any angle, in any position. No more hassles of drawing them from scratch!"

ABOVE: A Song for Arbonne *shows a long-vanished civilization with soldiers scattered, expecting an ambush.*

And when the films finally reach the cinemas, does John fear that admirers of Tolkien may be overwhelmed, even alienated, by a deluge of Middle Earth merchandise? "I find the Tolkien product list really pretty restrained compared to normal spin-off fare these days. However, when the films come out, I'm sure we'll all be ready to curl up by our firesides with the book again—having lit the fire with the movie tie-in book jacket! Peter Jackson puts it very well himself: 'It's just a film. No one is obliged to burn the book before buying a theater ticket!'"

John Howe's involvement with the filming of *The Lord of the Rings* is consistent with the art work he has been creating over the past 20 years: responding to a writer's imagination and giving visual realization to it. As a youngster, John's reactions to books—and to the Other Worlds they contain—was shaped by the artists who illustrated their jackets. Is he, in turn, conscious of shaping the reaction of those who read the books he illustrates?

"Not conscious at all. I never really think about it. People phone/fax/write all the time wanting to come and see the artist. I usually try to put them off—at least once. They are probably incredibly disappointed when they do meet me. I'm certainly not half as interesting as my work may be. Pictures are just what I do."

Ask John Howe what a book—or a picture—has to have in order to be a *great* work of Fantasy, and he'll tell you something along these lines: "It has to have the density of myth and legend and the grittiness of real life."

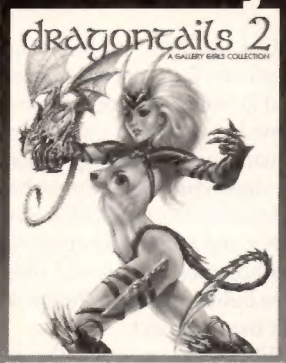
In one of his illustrations for the new *Lord of the Rings Diary*, John captures yet another moment in Gandalf's desperate struggle with the Balrog. It's a sequence to which the illustrator has returned again and again, and one that gives any artist considerable freedom, since Tolkien never actually described Gandalf's fearful adversary.

A few years ago, John created a dynamic painting of Gandalf battling the Balrog on the crumbling bridge of Khazad-dum: all was heat, fire, and smoke; the monster itself all teeth, hair, horns, and wings; lashing whip, and scything scimitar.

Now he has depicted the next instant in the narrative as the Balrog plunges downward into the depths of Moria, its taloned beast-hands spread, the great red maw of its mouth opened in a roar of rage, its vast batwings folded in and made transparent by the white burning light of Gandalf's sword, raised above his head as—his silver beard blown back like William Blake's "Ancient of Days," his arms and legs bloodied from the struggle—he clutches the creature by its throat and falls, along with his foe, toward the abyss and doom.

John Howe may say: "Pictures are just what I do," but this—like so many of his pictures—has all that "density of myth and legend," all the bloody turmoil that is "the grittiness of real life" by which we know a great work of Fantasy when we see it. ❧

LOVELY LEGENDS OF SKY, LAND & SEA



DRAGONTAILS 2
Powerful warrior women and their dragon consorts. Art by Hoffman, Rich Larson, Giorello, and others. Cover art by Joseph Linsner.
$14.00 ($10.00 plus $4.00 p&h).

JUNGLE TAILS 2
The second smash volume of big girls in small loincloths! Art by Joe Jusko, Esteban Maroto, Bob Rhett, others. Cover art by Blas Gallego.
$14.00 ($10.00 plus $4.00 p&h).

MERMAIDS 1
Sexy sirens leading sailors happily to their deaths! Art by Byrd, Ryman, Hoffman. Wrap-around cover painting by Joe Chiodo.
$14.00 ($10.00 plus $4.00 p&h).

SPECIAL REALMS OF FANTASY OFFER TO U.S. CUSTOMERS ONLY!
BUY ALL THREE BOOKS FOR JUST $35.00 (Save $7.00)

Make checks & money orders payable to: SQP Inc. CANADIAN ORDERS - Pay in US Dollars & add an additional $1.00 per book. Ordering by Phone? Have your Visa, Mastercard, AmEx, or Discover Card ready, & call
1-800-648-4789. Mention Realms of Fantasy to get special offer.

Send orders to:
SQP Inc - 38 Rappleyea Rd - Howell, NJ 07731

Del Tin swords from Italy are NOW AVAILABLE!

See them on our website:
www.fantasycutlery.com

Vaciacraft swords made in the Philippines are NOW AVAILABLE!

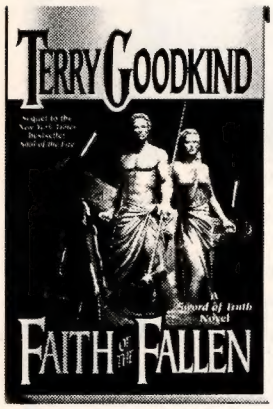
Made from high carbon steel blades that are 5/16" thick!
Dealer Inquiries are Welcome.

Place your order soon or send $3.00 for catalog to:
Fantasy Cutlery East
40 Casey Jones Lane, Suite 1, Jackson, TN 38305 • 901-664-5774
New E-mail address: fantasy@jaxn.com

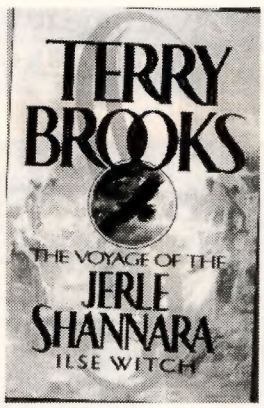
Signed First Editions

mysterious galaxy

BOOKS OF MARTIANS, MURDER, MAGIC & MAYHEM



Available in August
for $27.95



Available in
September for $26.95

Don't miss this limited time offer. To order your copy:

Call 800-811-4747,
Fax 858-268-4775, or email us at:
orders@mystgalaxy.com

All books are cover price. Add $6.00 for shipping and handling. California residents add Sales Tax of 7.75%. For multiple book orders or for shipments out of the US, please inquire for special shipping and handling rates. (Prices subject to change.)

Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore
7051 Clairemont Mesa Blvd. #302
San Diego, California 92111
www.mystgalaxy.com

Contributors

DEVON MONK is the Alpha female of a four generation household in Salem, Oregon, where she earned a degree in parenting, a fellowship in marriage, and a badge of honor in chaos management. Her stories have appeared in *Amazing Stories*, MZB's *Sword and Sorcery*, *Altair*, and a variety of other magazines and anthologies. She would like to thank the coffee industry and the little voices in her head for their support.

JAN LARS JENSEN has published numerous stories in such magazines as *Interzone*, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Aboriginal*, and *On Spec*. Jan's new novel, *Shiva 3000*, was published last year by Harcourt Brace in the U.S. and the U.K.

MINDY L. KLASKY says "Saving the Sky-children," is closely related to her current novel-in-progress, *Army of Children. Army* is the sequel to her novel entitled *The Glasswrights' Apprentice*, published by Roc this past July.

NAOMI KRITZER is the author of "Gift of the Winter King," which appeared in *Realms of Fantasy* last year. Her stories have appeared in *Scavenger's Newsletter* and the *Planet Relish* e-zine.

FRANKLIN THATCHER is a software developer by vocation, a writer by avocation, and bishop in the Mormon church by dedication. Though he has sold several planetarium star shows, he prefers to write Science Fiction and Fantasy. He and his wife, Laura, live in Orem, Utah.

RICHARD PARKS is a Mississippi storyteller. Atypical of the breed, he cannot tell a lie with a straight face, so he has to write them all down. Some of his better fibs have appeared in *Asimov's*, *Science Fiction Age*, *Realms*, and *Dragon* magazines. He lives with a wife and three cats who don't believe a word he says, except on his birthday and certain designated major holidays. (From the introduction to "Notes From the Bridge," *Blood Muse*, Donald I. Fine, Inc., edited by Esther Friesner.)

JANNY WURTS has been interested in space and the fantastic since childhood. She studied astronomy, art, and creative writing in college. She has published seven novels in the U.S. and Great Britain. Her illustrations have won several awards, including the 1994 Chelsey Award for Best Illustration: Hardcover Book. Janny's Fantasy and space hardware paintings have been displayed at NASA's 25th anniversary exhibit, at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and the Hayden Planetarium in NY. Her studio is located in Florida. Between painting and writing she pursues sailing, horseback riding, music, and astronomical observation through her telescope.

PATRICK ARRASMITH is living in Brooklyn and attended the California College of Arts and Crafts. Patrick has worked for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. His artwork has appeared in *The Society of Illustrator's Annual* and *The Village Voice*.

KEN GRANING teaches traditional illustration at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit. His advertising and editorial work has appeared in numerous magazines, books, posters, brochures, and record album covers.

STEVE ADLER grew up in Peekskill, NY. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design, studied independently in Rome, and has been a professional illustrator since 1984. His projects have included Fantasy covers for AvoNova and Viking Books, a Celestial Seasonings tea box, and an illustrated logo for the Barbados Tourism Authority. Steve also exhibits his paintings in galleries in northern Virginia near his home in Sperryville.

HEINZ INSU FENKL is the author of *Memories of my Ghost Brother*, an autobiographical novel about growing up as a biracial child in Korea in the '60s. The son of a German-American soldier and a Korean black-marketeer, he was raised in Korea, Germany, and the United States. He currently lives in Michigan with his wife, writer Anne B. Dalton and their daughter. In addition to being co-author of the *Realms* Folkroots column with Terri Windling, his work includes short stories and non-fiction published in a variety of magazines.

ERIC BAKER was born in Reno, Nevada but has lived in Fairfax, Virginia since 1970. He holds a degree in English from Virginia Tech and is an '89 graduate of Clarion. Eric sold his first story in 1992, and has since appeared in *Amazing*, *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, *Asimov's*, and *Science Fiction Age*.

JOHN PICACIO is a freelance illustrator who uses the collage and assemblage of mixed media and found objects to communicate about the world around him—and the world in his head. His clients include Random House, Mojo Press, *Texas Parks and Wildlife*, Night Shade Books, *Hispanic*, *The San Antonio Current*, and the Empire Theatre Company of Chicago. He lives and works in San Antonio Texas.

RESA NELSON attended graduate school at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, earning a Master's in sport management. She is currently a technical writer of Oracle Computer Corp. in Boston. Resa is a graduate of the 1985 Clairon Science Fiction Writer's Wrokshop. She has sold stories to *Science Fiction Age*, *Aboriginal*, and *Pulphouse*. She has written two novels she is trying to sell. ❧

THIRTY BUTT KICKING EPISODES!

or enjoy 17 chapters in the e-book or p-book!

"Ron is unfairly talented! I expect he'll get fed up with being called the new J.B. Cabell."
Sir Arthur C. Clarke
BRADAMANT
THE ✠ IRON ✠ TEMPEST
A NOVEL BY RON MILLER

ISBN 1-58752-027-3, $16.95

Available in
- Trade Paperback
- MP3 Download
- Cassette Tape
- Audio CD
- CD-ROM
- E-Book

Tune-in every Friday!

"Ron is unfairly talented..."
- **Sir Arthur C. Clarke**

"Bradamant is the definitive female butt-kicker, ... a dynamite job of novelizing her adventures ... highly recommended."
– **Mark E. Rogers**, author of *Zorachus, The Dead* and *Samurai Cat*

"Ron Miller has a startling dramatic range..."
– **Stephen Hickman**, author of *The Lemurian Stone*

". . . hilarious, extraordinary writing ... left me gasping for more."
– **Martin Olson**, novelist, screenwriter, producer
(Penn and Teller's *Sin City Spectacular*)

"A grand story, expertly written..."
– **George Zebrowski**, *John W. Campbell Award* winner for *Brute Orbits*

www.TimberwolfPress.com

Buy the Books or Tune-in every week for new
Fantasy, Science Fiction, Mysteries, Thrillers, Techno-Thrillers!

Wholesale Distribution: Hervey's Booklink, (800)-413-3300

An RPG as Vast as Legend Itself.

"...one of the biggest RPGs ever."
— IGN.PC

Wizards & Warriors™

Encounter over 100 NPCs, battle 75 monsters, wield weapons and cast over 100 magic spells.

Create a party of six adventurers from 15 different classes. Utilize 300 inventory items, including customizable pieces.

Embark on over 100 quests in 200 hours of gameplay, battling in real-time and turn-based combat.

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

From the Creator of
WIZARDRY® V, VI, AND VII,
D.W. BRADLEY

Heuristic Park

www.activision.com

ACTIVISION.

Wizards & Warriors is a trademark of Heuristic Park, Inc. © 2000 Heuristic Park, Inc. Published and distributed by Activision. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc. Wizardry is a registered trademark of 1259190 Ontario, Inc. All rights reserved. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.